

Plaintiff PEC Cross-Notice of Remote Deposition
and Non-Retained Expert Witness Disclosure of
Dr. Rahul Gupta

Exhibit 6

Gupta Trial Testimony
City of Huntington, et al. v. ABDC, et al.
3:17-cv-01362, 3:17-cv-01655

May 6, 2021

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA
AT CHARLESTON

	x	
	:	
THE CITY OF HUNTINGTON,	:	Civil Action
	:	
Plaintiff,	:	No. 3:17-cv-01362
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
AMERISOURCEBERGEN DRUG	:	
CORPORATION, et al.,	:	
	:	
Defendants.	:	

	x	
	:	
CABELL COUNTY COMMISSION,	:	Civil Action
	:	
Plaintiff,	:	No. 3:17-cv-01665
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
AMERISOURCEBERGEN DRUG	:	
CORPORATION, et al.,	:	
	:	
Defendants.	:	

BENCH TRIAL - VOLUME 4
BEFORE THE HONORABLE DAVID A. FABER, SENIOR STATUS JUDGE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
IN CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

MAY 6, 2021

APPEARANCES:

**For the Plaintiff,
Cabell County Commission:**

MR. PAUL T. FARRELL, JR.

Farrell Law
422 Ninth Street, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 1180
Huntington, WV 25701

MR. ANTHONY J. MAJESTRO

Powell & Majestro
Suite P-1200
405 Capitol Street
Charleston, WV 25301

MR. DAVID I. ACKERMAN

Motley Rice
Suite 1001
401 9th Street NW
Washington, DC

MR. PETER J. MOUGEY

Levin Papantonio Thomas Mitchell Rafferty & Proctor
Suite 600
316 South Baylen Street
Pensacola, FL 32502

MR. MICHAEL J. FULLER, JR.

Farrell & Fuller
Suite 202
1311 Ponce De Leon
San Juan, PR 00907

APPEARANCES (Continued):

**For the Plaintiff,
Cabell County Commission:**

MS. MILDRED CONROY

The Lanier Law Firm
Tower 56
126 East 56th Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 1022

MS. PEARL A. ROBERTSON

Irpino Avin Hawkins Law Firm
2216 Magazine Street
New Orleans, LA 70130

MR. MICHAEL W. WOELFEL

Woelfel & Woelfel
801 Eighth Street
Huntington, WV 25701

MR. CHARLES R. WEBB

The Webb Law Center
716 Lee Street East
Charleston, WV 25301

MS. ANNIE KOUBA

Motley Rice
28 Bridgeside Blvd.
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

MR. MARK P. PIFKO

Baron & Budd
Suite 1600
15910 Ventura Boulevard
Encino, CA 91436

**For the Plaintiff,
City of Huntington:**

MS. ANNE MCGINNESS KEARSE

Motley Rice
28 Bridgeside Blvd.
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

MS. LINDA J. SINGER

Motley Rice
Suite 1001
401 Ninth Street NW
Washington, DC 20004

MS. TEMITOPE LEYIMU

Motley Rice
28 Bridgeside Blvd.
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

**For the Defendant,
Cardinal Health:**

MS. ENU MAINIGI

MS. JENNIFER WICHT

Williams Connolly
725 Twelfth Street NW
Washington, DC 20005

MS. SUZANNE SALGADO

725 Twelfth Street NW
Washington, DC 20005

MR. STEVEN R. RUBY

Carey Douglas Kessler & Ruby
901 Chase Tower
707 Virginia Street, East
Charleston, WV 25301

APPEARANCES (Continued):

**For the Defendant,
Cardinal Health:**

MS. ASHLEY W. HARDIN
MR. ISIA JASIEWICZ
Williams & Connolly
25 Twelfth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

APPEARANCES (Continued):

**For the Defendant,
McKesson:**

MR. TIMOTHY C. HESTER
MR. PAUL W. SCHMIDT
MS. LAURA M. FLAHIVE WU
MR. ANDREW STANNER
Covington & Burling
One City Center
850 Tenth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

MR. JEFFREY M. WAKEFIELD
Flaherty Sensabaugh & Bonasso
P.O. Box 3843
Charleston, WV 25338-3843

APPEARANCES (Continued):

**For the Defendant,
AmerisourceBergen Drug Corporation:**

MS. SHANNON E. MCCLURE

MR. JOSEPH J. MAHADY

Reed Smith
Three Logan Square
Suite 3100
1717 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

MS. GRETCHEN M. CALLAS

Jackson Kelly
P.O. Box 553
Charleston, WV 25322

APPEARANCES (Continued):

MR. ROBERT A. NICHOLAS

Reed Smith
Suite 3100
Three Logan Square
1717 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103

MS. ELIZABETH CAMPBELL

1300 Morris Drive
Chesterbrook, PA 19087

Court Reporter: Ayme Cochran, RMR, CRR
Court Reporter: Lisa A. Cook, RPR-RMR-CRR-FCRR

Proceedings recorded by mechanical stenography;
transcript produced by computer.

1 ECF filing 1146-1 that contains the actual disclosures to
2 tender to the Court.

3 MS. MAINIGI: Your Honor, this -- we were not
4 aware that this was going to be raised this morning. We're
5 prepared to finish out the cross examination of Dr. Gupta.
6 What I would ask is we be allowed to finish that out and
7 then, certainly, if Mr. Farrell wants to continue discussing
8 this, we're happy to do that.

9 THE COURT: Yes. I think that's the proper way to
10 go, Mr. Farrell. So, we'll finish with Dr. Gupta and we'll
11 then deal with this, if you have anything else.

12 MR. FARRELL: Thank you.

13 THE COURT: Dr. Gupta, are you in the courtroom?

14 You may resume the stand. You're still under oath,
15 sir.

16 MS. MAINIGI: May I proceed, Your Honor? Your
17 Honor, may I proceed?

18 THE COURT: Yes, please.

19 MS. MAINIGI: Thank you.

20 **CONTINUED CROSS EXAMINATION**

21 **BY MS. MAINIGI:**

22 **Q.** Good morning, Dr. Gupta.

23 **A.** Good morning.

24 Good morning, Your Honor.

25 **Q.** I think yesterday we looked at the 2016 West Virginia

1 Overdose Fatality Analysis. Do you recall that?

2 **A.** Yes.

3 **Q.** If you could pull that up, I just double checked this
4 morning. It still seems to be there. Now, I'd like you to
5 turn to Page 58 of your Overdose Fatality Analysis, please,
6 sir. And this is where the Summary of Key Recommendations
7 are, correct?

8 **A.** Yes.

9 **Q.** Now, do you recall when I asked you yesterday about
10 whether you made recommendations about distributors, you
11 testified that was because -- that you had not because
12 distributors are -- and I think you said something like not
13 within the purview of the Bureau of Public Health. Do you
14 recall that yesterday afternoon?

15 **A.** Yes.

16 **Q.** You also testified that the Bureau of Public Health
17 does not regulate law enforcement or distributors. Do you
18 recall saying that yesterday?

19 **A.** Yes.

20 **Q.** I just want to draw your attention to a couple of the
21 recommendations. If we look at the sixth bullet down, sir.
22 The sixth bullet down --

23 **A.** Yes.

24 **Q.** -- states as follows: "Corrections officials should
25 work with judges to assure naloxone availability, treatment

1 referral, and peer supports at release of incarceration."

2 Do you see that?

3 **A.** Yes.

4 **Q.** Now, the Department of Corrections is not within the
5 purview of the Bureau of Public Health, correct?

6 **A.** Correct.

7 **Q.** And the Bureau of Public Health does not regulate the
8 Department of Corrections, right?

9 **A.** Correct.

10 **Q.** And judges are not within the purview of the Bureau of
11 Public Health either, correct?

12 **A.** Correct.

13 **Q.** And the Bureau of Public Health does not regulate
14 judges, right?

15 **A.** That's correct. And I am happy to explain that
16 recommendation, if you would allow me to.

17 **Q.** I don't think it's necessary right now, but thank you.
18 Let's look at number -- the third recommendation down. And
19 that third recommendation is, "Enhance CSMP Advisory
20 Committee legislation to identify abnormal or unusual
21 prescribing and dispensing patterns and to permit sharing
22 this data with appropriate professional licensing boards and
23 other agencies." Do you see that, sir?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** Now, the Board of Pharmacy runs the CSMP, correct?

1 **A.** Correct.

2 **Q.** Not the Bureau of Public Health, correct?

3 **A.** That's not correct.

4 **Q.** The Board of Pharmacy is within the purview of the
5 Bureau for Public Health?

6 **A.** That's not correct.

7 **Q.** Okay. So, the Board of Pharmacy is not within the
8 purview of the Bureau of Public Health, correct?

9 **A.** That's correct.

10 **Q.** And the Bureau of Public Health does not regulate the
11 Board of Pharmacy?

12 **A.** That's correct.

13 **Q.** And the Bureau of Public Health does not regulate the
14 state legislature, I assume?

15 **A.** That would be correct.

16 **Q.** Now, you have made several recommendations to the
17 legislature about what it should do or should consider
18 doing; is that not true?

19 **A.** That is true. And, once again, I'm really happy to
20 explain the intricate relationships of agencies in the State
21 of West Virginia, including the Bureau of Public Health
22 relationship with the Board of Pharmacy --

23 **Q.** Thank you, sir.

24 **A.** -- and with Corrections.

25 **Q.** Thank you. I think one of the -- one of the

1 contributions that I assume you are the most proud of from
2 your time as State Commissioner is your involvement with the
3 Opioid Reduction Act, right?

4 **A.** Yes.

5 **Q.** Now, coming back to the Board of Pharmacy, the Board of
6 Pharmacy regulates distributors, right?

7 **A.** I have -- I have -- again, once again, I do not --
8 Board of -- Bureau for Public Health does not regulate as
9 you correctly outlined. Board of Pharmacy, you would have
10 to ask Board of Pharmacy who they regulate and who they do
11 not.

12 **Q.** Fair enough. Now, coming back to your involvement,
13 from time to time, as you said, you get involved in
14 recommendations to the legislature, correct?

15 **A.** Correct.

16 **Q.** And that's from your purview originally -- well, from
17 recent -- most recently from your purview as the State
18 Commissioner of Health, correct?

19 **A.** That's one of the ways.

20 **Q.** And another way is that when you were the Health
21 Officer, the lead Health Officer at Kanawha-Charleston, you
22 also made some recommendations or were involved with
23 legislation, right?

24 **A.** So, I sit -- I sat on about 30-plus boards. Once
25 again, I'm happy to explain my involvement but, yes, that

1 would be correct, as well, but one of the several, several
2 other ways.

3 **Q.** Okay. You can set that report aside for now, Mr.
4 Gupta.

5 So, are you familiar with Senate Bill 437, Dr. Gupta?

6 **A.** Ms. Mainigi, you would have to state the year and I
7 would have to look at it because the Senate Bill 437
8 potentially occurs in every legislative session in state
9 legislature.

10 **Q.** That's a great point. I apologize for that. This is
11 Senate Bill from -- Senate Bill 437 from 2012. And why
12 don't I get a copy to you of that so you can take a look at
13 it.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May I approach?

15 THE COURT: Yes.

16 BY MS. MAINIGI:

17 **Q.** Now, Dr. Gupta, while you are taking a look at that, I
18 will just note for you for the record that Senate Bill 437,
19 I think, is something that I saw on your CV and you noted it
20 as substance abuse legislation and you noted on your CV your
21 role as the following: "Supported the Governor's Substance
22 Use Disorder initiative as social determinate of health
23 initiative, passed the legislature, and approved by Governor
24 Tomblin on 3/29/2012." And I offer that to you just to jog
25 your memory on this.

1 Let me know when you're ready, Dr. Gupta.

2 **A.** I have not had the opportunity to review this bill and
3 I have made my best attempt to take a very superficial look
4 at this, but I just want to say for the record again that
5 this is prior to my position as being the Bureau for Public
6 Health Commissioner.

7 **Q.** Understood, Dr. Gupta. I raise it as -- and I'm happy
8 to put your CV in front of you. I don't think we need to,
9 though, unless you really want it, but your CV refers to
10 Senate Bill 437, as I mentioned, as substance abuse
11 legislation that in the role that you had in 2012 was --
12 which was as Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer, that you
13 supported the Governor's Substance Use Disorder initiative.
14 Do you agree with that?

15 **A.** I would agree with that. And I'm happy to look at
16 which portions of this. I did not draft the bill.

17 **Q.** Understood. Understood. I understand that.

18 **A.** So, there are pieces that -- I think it would be unfair
19 to characterize supporting the entire bill and I am happy to
20 look at the pieces that were relevant to my position at the
21 time that I would have supported it.

22 **Q.** Okay. Fair enough. Well, let me ask you a couple of
23 questions and you're obviously free to continue looking at
24 the bill. Dr. Gupta, you're aware that Senate Bill 437
25 required continuing medical education for all prescribers of

1 controlled substances, correct?

2 **A.** Yes, correct.

3 **Q.** And the purpose of the continuing education was to
4 educate prescribers about when they should and should not
5 prescribe opioids, correct?

6 **A.** Again, having said that, I have not reviewed the entire
7 bill. The purpose of the legislation was to ensure that
8 prescribers had the appropriate training and understanding
9 what it takes in order to prescribe opioid prescriptions.

10 **Q.** Thank you. Another thing that Senate Bill 437 did in
11 2012 was it enhanced the use of the Controlled Substances
12 Monitoring Program, correct?

13 **A.** If you say so.

14 **Q.** Do you recall that it did?

15 **A.** In my position as the local health officer of
16 Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, I had no role with the
17 Controlled Substance Monitoring Program.

18 **Q.** You came to have a role with it as the State Health
19 Officer or no?

20 **A.** Ms. Mainigi, I was trying to explain that, but you
21 denied my request to explain that just a minute ago.

22 **Q.** Because the -- excuse me -- because the Board of
23 Pharmacy oversees the CSMP, correct?

24 **A.** I will be very happy to explain my role as the
25 Commissioner for Public Health and involvement of the

1 Controlled Substance Monitoring Program and the Board of
2 Pharmacy, if I'm allowed to, in this court.

3 **Q.** Well, let's just step back for a moment and let's
4 define it. The CSMP, Dr. Gupta, the Controlled Substances
5 Monitoring Program, is essentially a database of all the
6 controlled substances prescriptions filled in the state,
7 right?

8 **A.** In my role as Commissioner for Bureau for Public
9 Health, my understanding of the Controlled Substance
10 Monitoring Program was that it's a database of between
11 Schedule II and Schedule IV. So, it does not have Schedule
12 I substances. So, I just wanted to correct you on that.

13 **Q.** And the CSMP, as it's known, is not open to the public,
14 correct?

15 **A.** Controlled Substance Monitoring Program is not open to
16 the public.

17 **Q.** And distributors don't have access to the CSMP,
18 correct?

19 **A.** I do not have that information.

20 **Q.** Okay. So. Coming back to SB-437, do you recall that
21 one of the things that SB-437 accomplished was to enhance
22 the use of the CSMP?

23 **A.** I can explain to you, Ms. Mainigi, what my role was in
24 this legislation as we're speaking here as a local health
25 officer at the time. I am not able to testify to exact --

1 every piece of this legislation because I did not have that
2 role, as I explained.

3 **Q.** When you became the State Health Officer, obviously,
4 with the ownership for the whole state, you obviously had an
5 interest in the CSMP, right?

6 **A.** Yes, and I would love to explain that to you, if you
7 allow me to.

8 **Q.** Okay. Well, we don't need to do that right now. If
9 you could turn to -- if you look at the bottom numbers on
10 the lower right, DEF-WV-00027696, Dr. Gupta.

11 **A.** I'm there.

12 **Q.** And you'll see Article 9 relates to the Controlled
13 Substances Monitoring Program. And why don't you just take
14 a moment and read that to yourself, sir.

15 MS. KEARSE: Can you give me that page number
16 again?

17 MS. MAINIGI: Sure. It is bottom right, 00027696.

18 THE WITNESS: I've been able to read Article 9,
19 Section 60(a)-9-3, subsections (a), (b), (c), numbers 1 and
20 2.

21 BY MS. MAINIGI:

22 **Q.** Terrific. And do you agree that one of the purposes of
23 SB-437 was to enhance the use of the CSMP?

24 **A.** I would agree not being practically engaged in SB-437
25 on this matter.

1 **Q.** And the continuing -- the CSMP, the enhancement of the
2 CSMP, that related to doctors, correct?

3 **A.** Not only doctors.

4 **Q.** Prescribers?

5 **A.** Not only prescribers.

6 **Q.** It certainly affected prescribers, correct?

7 **A.** Not only prescribers.

8 **Q.** And the medical education certainly affected
9 prescribers, correct?

10 **A.** It did affect prescribers of Schedule II to Schedule IV
11 substances.

12 **Q.** And were you aware that one of the other things that
13 SB-437 accomplished was that it established state regulation
14 of pain clinics and MAT programs?

15 **A.** I was generally aware as a member of the public. I did
16 not have a specific role in this particular legislation with
17 relation to that.

18 **Q.** And the regulation that pain clinics and MAT programs
19 also related to doctors, correct?

20 **A.** In my role as local health officer, I could not tell
21 you that at this time.

22 **Q.** And are you aware that Senate Bill 437 did not impose
23 new regulatory requirements on distributors?

24 **A.** I am not aware.

25 **Q.** Are you aware it didn't impose any new licensing

1 requirements on distributors?

2 **A.** I am not aware.

3 **Q.** Are you aware that it didn't impose any new reporting
4 requirements to the Board of Pharmacy?

5 **A.** I'm not sure. If you can repeat the question in
6 regards to Board of Pharmacy.

7 **Q.** Are you aware that it did not impose new reporting
8 requirements for distributors to the Board of Pharmacy?

9 **A.** I'm not aware.

10 **Q.** Are you aware that Senate Bill 437 did not limit the
11 volume of opioids that a pharmacy could purchase?

12 **A.** I am not aware of that.

13 **Q.** Now, you can set that aside, sir.

14 Let me come back to the Controlled Substances
15 Monitoring Program for a moment. Before 2016, is it fair to
16 say prescribers were not required to utilize the CSMP?

17 **A.** I could not give you an opinion on that.

18 **Q.** Okay. As State Health Officer you don't have knowledge
19 -- you didn't have knowledge in that period of time
20 regarding the CSMP?

21 **A.** I came into the office in 2015 and I can provide you
22 information and knowledge as to my role with the CSMP, as
23 well as Board of Pharmacy, and I can also provide you my
24 role as a practitioner. I can also provide you information
25 on my role as a Secretary of the Board of Medicine and the

1 relationship to the Board of Pharmacy and CSMP. So, I'm
2 happy to provide the Court all of that information if -- if
3 it desires so.

4 **Q.** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Gupta. Let me just ask you
5 again, in your role as State Health Officer, were you
6 familiar with the CSMP?

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** And are you familiar with the fact that prior to 2016,
9 prescribers were not required to register with the CSMP?

10 **A.** I do not exactly remember that, recall that. I would
11 -- I would say that the guidelines prior were more
12 voluntary. That's the way I would characterize that.

13 **Q.** And while you were State Health Officer, obviously with
14 a great concern about opioids and other controlled
15 substances, do you recall that in 2016 Senate Bill 454 which
16 related to the CSMP was signed into law by Governor Tomblin?

17 **A.** I do recall that.

18 **Q.** And you supported this legislation, correct?

19 **A.** That would be accurate.

20 **Q.** And that bill made it a requirement that all physicians
21 who prescribed controlled substances had to register with
22 the West Virginia CSMP, correct?

23 **A.** Once again, I would love to see the bill before I can
24 assert to that statement.

25 **Q.** Is that what you generally recall about the bill,

1 however?

2 **A.** I would -- I recall legislation requiring registration
3 of prescribers of Schedule II to IV with the State's
4 Controlled Substance Monitoring Program around that time
5 period.

6 **Q.** And do you recall that the number of prescriber
7 registrants nearly doubled as a result of this legislation?

8 **A.** I do not have factual knowledge to that fact at this
9 time.

10 **Q.** Do you recall that Senate Bill 454 also required
11 prescribers to check a patient's history before prescribing
12 an opioid?

13 **A.** Around that time, the legislation would have required,
14 along with registration, to also ensure that physicians were
15 looking to see if there are more than one pharmacy or more
16 than one prescriber, actually, for Controlled Substance
17 Monitoring Program.

18 **Q.** So, prior to Senate Bill 454, physicians were not
19 required to check the patient's prescription history before
20 writing an opioid prescription, correct?

21 **A.** I believe the appropriate statement of that would be
22 that physicians were able to voluntarily do that, but they
23 were not required by state law.

24 **Q.** And one of the things, a requirement to check the
25 patient's prescription history accomplished, was prescribers

1 could now see, since they were required to do it, if a
2 patient had filled prescriptions at multiple pharmacies,
3 right?

4 MR. FARRELL: Objection, Your Honor.

5 THE COURT: Basis?

6 MR. FARRELL: She's asking a witness about the
7 purpose of a law.

8 MS. MAINIGI: Your Honor, I'm not asking him about
9 the purpose of the law. I'm asking --

10 THE COURT: You're asking what the law said,
11 right?

12 MS. MAINIGI: Correct, Your Honor.

13 THE COURT: Overruled. Go ahead. You can answer
14 it.

15 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Your Honor. I'm not able
16 to answer accurately and factually to your question.

17 BY MS. MAINIGI:

18 **Q.** Okay. Let me put Senate Bill 454 in front of you, Dr.
19 Gupta. I'm sorry I failed to do that. Senate Bill 454, for
20 the record, is DEF-WV-03015 and, Dr. Gupta, you're welcome
21 to read any page you want, but I'll draw your attention to
22 one of the last pages, Page 25 in the bottom right. And I
23 think the section is entitled, sir -- it's Section 60A-9-5a
24 and it's entitled "Practitioner Requirements to Access
25 Database and Conduct Annual Search of the Database; Required

1 Rulemaking."

2 Let me know when you're ready, Dr. Gupta.

3 **A.** I'm here on the page.

4 **Q.** And let me just -- I'm not sure I have that much more,
5 Dr. Gupta, on this, but I just wanted to confirm that the
6 record is clear Senate Bill 454 required prescribers to
7 check a patient's history before prescribing an opioid,
8 correct?

9 **A.** I am trying to look for that particular language before
10 I can answer your question. It says, "Upon initially
11 prescribing or dispensing any pain-relieving controlled
12 substance for a patient and at least annually thereafter
13 should be -- should the practitioner or dispenser continue
14 to treat the patient with controlled substances, all persons
15 with prescriptive or dispensing authority and in possession
16 of a valid Drug Enforcement Administration registration
17 identification number and, who are licensed by the Board of
18 Medicine as set forth in Article III, Chapter 30 of this
19 code, the Board of Registered Professional Nurses as set
20 forth in Article 7, Chapter 30 of this code." It goes on to
21 say, basically, according to that.

22 **Q.** Thank you, Dr. Gupta. Now, you're not aware that this
23 bill provided distributors with access to the CSMP, correct?

24 **A.** Once again, I have not thoroughly studied the bill. I
25 cannot provide that answer to you.

1 **Q.** You can set that aside, sir.

2 Now, in 2016, Dr. Gupta, while you were State Health
3 Commissioner, you are aware that the CDC issued guidelines
4 for prescribing opioids for chronic pain, correct?

5 **A.** Yes.

6 **Q.** Okay. And after the CDC guidelines came out, you are
7 aware that West Virginia convened an expert panel to issue
8 new pain management guidelines, correct?

9 **A.** Correct.

10 **Q.** And you were a member -- and those were called the SEMP
11 guidelines; is that right?

12 **A.** I would recall that at this point, yes.

13 **Q.** The -- and SEMP stands for Safe and Effective
14 Management of Pain Guidelines; does that sound right?

15 **A.** That would sound accurate to my recollection, but I
16 don't have the guidelines in front of me right now, so I am
17 not sure.

18 **Q.** Okay. Let me get those for you, please. And, Dr.
19 Gupta, I probably won't spend that much time on these, but
20 do you agree that the SEMP -- that the -- excuse me -- the
21 expert panel that issued the new pain management guidelines,
22 that those guidelines were called the Safe and Effective
23 Management of Pain Guidelines?

24 **A.** I'm sorry. What's the question?

25 **Q.** Do you agree that the guidelines were called the Safe

1 and Effective Management of Pain Guidelines?

2 **A.** Yes.

3 **Q.** And those were issued in 2016, correct?

4 **A.** That's the date on this document.

5 **Q.** And if you turn to Page 4 of the document, sir, that
6 document, that page of the document, lists the members of
7 the panel, correct?

8 **A.** That's correct.

9 **Q.** And you were on that panel, as you said, correct?

10 **A.** That's correct.

11 **Q.** And the panel was chaired by Dr. Timothy Deer, correct?

12 **A.** Correct.

13 **Q.** And the panel issued guidance to prescribers and
14 dispensers as an expansion to the CDC Chronic Pain Opioid
15 Guidelines, correct?

16 **A.** I wouldn't describe it like that.

17 **Q.** If you could take a look at Page 4, sir, do you see the
18 first sentence in the first full paragraph?

19 **A.** I do.

20 **Q.** And that sentence reads, "This overall pain management
21 guidance is intended for both prescribers and dispensers as
22 an expansion to the 2016 CDC Chronic Pain Opioid
23 Guidelines." Is that what it says?

24 **A.** It says that.

25 **Q.** Now, these guidelines ultimately came to be endorsed by

1 multiple health professional organizations in West Virginia,
2 correct?

3 **A.** There are several. Multiple would be correct, but I
4 can -- I am happy to explain the context of it, if you would
5 like me to.

6 **Q.** Do you recall that the West Virginia State Medical
7 Association endorsed these guidelines?

8 **A.** I'm going to go through and see which ones. I don't
9 see it listed in my quick browsing.

10 **Q.** Okay. Let me come back to the sentence for a moment.
11 A prescriber is someone who prescribes opioids, right?

12 **A.** Not necessarily. A prescriber can prescribe many more
13 pharmaceutical compounds, non-pharmaceutical compounds, in
14 addition to opioids.

15 **Q.** Fair enough. And a dispenser is someone like a
16 pharmacist who dispenses drugs?

17 **A.** Dispenser in medicine could be a lot of people beyond
18 pharmacy.

19 **Q.** Okay. Now, in 2018, I think we talked about this
20 yesterday. You also -- you can set that aside, sir.

21 You also helped draft Senate Bill 273; is that correct,
22 which it came to be known as the Opioid Reduction Act?

23 **A.** That's correct. I'm much more familiar with that one.

24 **Q.** And you viewed the Opioid Reduction Act as a reasonable
25 effort to address the contemporary crisis that we were

1 facing, correct?

2 **A.** That would be accurate.

3 **Q.** And the Opioid Reduction Act imposed new limits on
4 opioid prescriptions; is that right?

5 **A.** As a state level effort, yes.

6 **Q.** And, for example, it limited prescriptions for minors
7 to three days, correct?

8 **A.** I would love to see that, once again, in front of me
9 because I do not recall every section of the Senate Bill 273
10 sitting right here.

11 **Q.** But you recall as a general matter that there were days
12 supply limitations imposed on opioids as part of the Opioid
13 Reduction Act?

14 **A.** I recall as a general matter the attempt of the Opioid
15 Reduction Act was to follow good science, good evidence, and
16 create guidelines based on that in legislation.

17 **Q.** And what that involved in part was setting days supply
18 of limitations on the prescription of opioids, correct?

19 **A.** What that involved in part was following CDC guidelines
20 and transitioning those evidence-based guidelines into
21 legislation that included limitation of initial
22 prescriptions to -- for prescribers.

23 **Q.** So, for example, do you recall that it allowed for a
24 seven-day prescription if the medical purpose said that it
25 supported it in the record?

1 **A.** So, once again, I would love to see that in front of me
2 because we had debated back and forth three days, four days
3 with different committees and it was a matter of
4 negotiation. So, but I do recall that for initial
5 prescribing, I believe it was about four days and, for some
6 other reasons, it was seven days. So, there were variations
7 in that within the legislation.

8 **Q.** And there was limitations imposed on dentists, also,
9 correct?

10 **A.** That would be accurate.

11 **Q.** Because some dentists -- dentists were allowed to
12 prescribe opioids after certain dental procedures, correct?

13 **A.** You've asked me why it was a limitation on dentists.
14 My answer is there were limitations on prescribers for
15 controlled substances beyond physicians because there was
16 such a volume that was being provided and prescribed by and
17 in communities that was -- that included prescriptions from
18 dentists and other providers, as well.

19 **Q.** And do you recall that there was a three-day limitation
20 for dentists?

21 **A.** I don't recall the exact limitation of every profession
22 in the bill at this time while I'm sitting here.

23 **Q.** Do you recall it was around three days?

24 **A.** Three to seven days, three to five days is usually the
25 evidence-based best practice for initial prescribing. So,

1 that would be the area, but if I saw the legislation, I
2 would be able to tell you more definitively.

3 **Q.** And prior to this Opioid Reduction Act, a dentist could
4 have prescribed a 30-day supply of opioids, correct?

5 **A.** Certainly.

6 **Q.** And, to your knowledge, the Opioid Reduction Act did
7 not contain any new requirements for distributors, correct?

8 **A.** I do not have that stationed in front of me to say that
9 at this point.

10 **Q.** And, to your knowledge, the Opioid Reduction Act did
11 not impose limits on the distributions of opioids to
12 pharmacies, correct?

13 **A.** Could you please repeat that again?

14 **Q.** Sure. To your knowledge, the Opioid Reduction Act did
15 not impose limitations on the distributions of opioids to
16 pharmacies?

17 **A.** I -- I cannot recall for or against that.

18 **Q.** Now, one of the things you said yesterday, Dr. Gupta,
19 when you were being asked questions by Ms. Kearse was where
20 West Virginia ranks compared to the country is -- was
21 important for you to know as the State Health Commissioner,
22 correct?

23 **A.** Correct.

24 **Q.** Let me put another exhibit in front of you.

25 MS. MAINIGI: Could I have DEF-WV-00747, State of

1 Health presentation?

2 BY MS. MAINIGI:

3 Q. Now, Dr. Gupta, this is a PowerPoint presentation that
4 you put together in August, 2018 entitled "Public Health in
5 West Virginia: Brief History and Current State of Health,"
6 correct?

7 A. That's what it states, correct.

8 Q. And this particular report happens to have your name on
9 the front, correct?

10 A. This one does. This presentation does, as well.

11 Q. And was this a presentation that you made to others in
12 the State of West Virginia?

13 A. This was a presentation and it states on the report I
14 made on August 6th, 2018 to the sanitarian training.

15 Q. If you could turn to Page 38 of your report, Dr. Gupta.

16 A. I'm here.

17 Q. Now, at Slide 38, there's a chart comparing annual
18 prescription per capita in 2016 across all the states; is
19 that right?

20 A. That's correct.

21 Q. And where does West Virginia rank?

22 A. It's highlighted as ranking number one.

23 Q. Okay. And what does the number 20.8 mean?

24 A. That means 20.8 prescriptions per 100 -- per --
25 actually, per person, per capita.

1 **Q.** And that means West Virginia ranked number one in total
2 prescriptions at that point in time, correct?

3 **A.** That's correct.

4 **Q.** And that's not just opioid prescriptions. This is all
5 prescriptions, correct?

6 **A.** That's correct.

7 THE COURT: Does that mean 20 prescriptions for
8 every person in the state at that time?

9 THE WITNESS: Yes, Your Honor.

10 THE COURT: Is that what that means?

11 THE WITNESS: Yes, Your Honor.

12 BY MS. MAINIGI:

13 **Q.** Now, if you could take a look at Page 68 -- oh, excuse
14 me. Not 68. Let me back up.

15 I believe you have testified before, Dr. Gupta, that
16 West Virginia has a higher than average incidence of people
17 in circumstances that lead to pain, like manual labor jobs,
18 correct?

19 MR. FARRELL: Excuse me, Your Honor. Can we have
20 a date and page reference to his prior testimony?

21 THE COURT: Yes. Yes

22 MS. MAINIGI: Sure. Let's go ahead and put Dr.
23 Gupta's 2016 deposition up at Page 68, Lines 6 through 15.

24 MR. FARRELL: Objection, Your Honor, unless we
25 intend to do cross examination by showing cross examination.

1 MS. MAINIGI: Well, you asked for a citation, so I
2 thought I'd put it up. Do you not want me to put it up?

3 THE COURT: Do you want it down, Mr. Farrell?

4 MR. FARRELL: No. I'm just curious as to whether
5 or not we're going to be allowed to show cross examination
6 to witnesses before we actually cross examine them. I'm
7 okay with that.

8 MS. MAINIGI: I thought you asked for a citation,
9 so I thought I'd put it up because you might not have it
10 handy.

11 THE COURT: Well, I'm going to let -- I'm going to
12 allow this. We need to get through this. Go ahead, please.

13 MS. MAINIGI: Yes, Your Honor.

14 Let's go ahead and put it up, Matt, please.

15 BY MS. MAINIGI:

16 **Q.** And in your 2016 deposition, you were asked, Doctor
17 Gupta, How would you characterize the rate of legitimate
18 pain in West Virginia", and you responded at that point in
19 time, "I would characterize it by the following. There's
20 reason to believe, certainly, that because of the mining and
21 number of other labor activities that West Virginians have -
22 traditionally have had a lot of laborious work in the
23 industry and, as a result, that one can argue that
24 historically that could be higher levels of pain related to
25 the work in those industries." Do you recall testifying in

1 that manner?

2 **A.** Ms. Mainigi, I do not have in front of me this
3 deposition from five years ago and you're going to have to
4 allow me to explain those statements if you expect me to
5 answer questions related to these statements.

6 **Q.** Okay. Let me turn first, before we come back to that,
7 to Slide 27 of your presentation. Now, this slide lists
8 West Virginia morbidity indicators, correct?

9 **A.** This slide lists West Virginia morbidity indicators as
10 per the Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System of 2016 as
11 reported by Health Statistics Center at DHHR.

12 **Q.** West Virginia ranks number one in arthritis; is that
13 correct?

14 **A.** That's correct.

15 **Q.** And can you explain to me what that means?

16 **A.** Thank you for the opportunity. Arthritis is a
17 condition one can develop from a lot of reasons and we --
18 the ranking of arthritis in the nation is important where
19 West Virginia ranks, but the trend data is equally
20 important. For example, we have seen a mere two percentage
21 point of increase in arthritis over more than a decade in
22 West Virginia.

23 So, while it ranks number one, it has always been close
24 to number one. So, there was not a tsunami of increase in
25 the cases of arthritis in the period of time we're talking

1 about.

2 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, let's take a look at the number there. 38.9
3 percent is the West Virginia prevalence of arthritis in
4 2016?

5 **A.** Yes.

6 **Q.** And the country was at 25.3 percent --

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** -- on average? Okay. Poor health limitations, where
9 did West Virginia rank?

10 **A.** Once again, in 2016, it ranked --

11 **Q.** Dr. Gupta --

12 **A.** I'm answering your question.

13 **Q.** Okay. Where did West Virginia rank in 2016?

14 **A.** It ranked number one at 23.6 percent for that
15 particular year.

16 **Q.** Okay. And for cardiovascular disease, where did West
17 Virginia rank in the country?

18 **A.** For 2016, it ranked at 14.6 percent, number one, which
19 has been consistent over the years, without a significant
20 change over the years.

21 **Q.** And, Dr. Gupta, I'd appreciate it if you would just
22 answer the question. Where did West Virginia rank for COPD
23 in 2016 according to your chart?

24 **A.** One.

25 **Q.** And where did West Virginia rank in hypertension

1 according to your chart in 2016?

2 **A.** One.

3 **Q.** And where did West Virginia rank for diabetes in 2016
4 according to your chart?

5 **A.** Two.

6 **Q.** And where did West Virginia rank for depression in 2016
7 according to your chart?

8 **A.** Two.

9 **Q.** And where did West Virginia rank in 2016 for cancer
10 according to your chart?

11 **A.** Three.

12 **Q.** And all of the conditions I just described, Dr. Gupta,
13 all of those conditions could result in pain for the
14 individuals who suffer from them, correct?

15 **A.** Not necessarily. And I'm happy to explain that again,
16 if you would like me to.

17 **Q.** Thank you. Now, let's turn to Page 24 of your
18 presentation. This page is entitled "West Virginia
19 Demographics", correct?

20 **A.** Correct.

21 **Q.** And the median age for West Virginians in 2016 was the
22 fourth highest in the nation based on census data, correct?

23 **A.** That's what it says.

24 **Q.** This page also notes that West Virginia had a higher
25 than average disabled population, correct?

1 **A.** It states there was -- 18 percent report being
2 disabled.

3 **Q.** And turning to Page --

4 MS. MAINIGI: Actually, why don't we go ahead and
5 take that down.

6 BY MS. MAINIGI:

7 **Q.** Thank you, Dr. Gupta.

8 Dr. Gupta, you are an expert for the plaintiffs in the
9 MLP opioid cases, correct?

10 **A.** Correct.

11 **Q.** And you are an expert in abatement?

12 **A.** Correct.

13 **Q.** And you get paid \$500.00 an hour; is that correct?

14 **A.** As I mentioned in my deposition, I don't exactly recall
15 the exact hourly rate.

16 **Q.** Is that approximately how much you get paid an hour?

17 **A.** Could be plus, minus.

18 **Q.** And you were originally retained by Mr. Colantonio in
19 this case?

20 **A.** I do not -- that would not be accurate.

21 **Q.** Who were you originally retained by?

22 **A.** That was Natalie Shkolnik.

23 **Q.** And are you retained by Mr. Colantonio in this case?

24 **A.** As my personal attorney capacity. He's functioning as
25 my personal attorney on this.

1 MS. KEARSE: Can I get clarification of what, Your
2 Honor, just -- what case? When you say "this case"?

3 MS. MAINIGI: I apologize. That was unclear. I
4 will clarify.

5 BY MS. MAINIGI:

6 Q. In -- Mr. Colantonio is serving as your personal
7 attorney in this matter that you're testifying --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- here for today?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Is Mr. Colantonio also your attorney in the MLP
12 cases?

13 A. Natalie Shkolnik is the attorney that I'm dealing with
14 in the MLP case.

15 Q. Now, Mr. Colantonio is here today in the courtroom,
16 right?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Okay. And Mr. Colantonio, did he take part of your
19 deposition when you were deposed by us in this matter?

20 A. There was two depositions. Could you please clarify
21 which one?

22 Q. Let me clarify for you.

23 A. You're confusing me.

24 Q. That's a fair point. That's a fair point. So, in
25 2020, you were deposed in this matter, correct?

1 **A.** There was one deposition in September of 2020, correct.

2 **Q.** And at that deposition in September of 2020, you were
3 deposed by the defendants in this case, correct?

4 **A.** Correct.

5 **Q.** And you were also deposed by Mr. Colantonio in that
6 case, correct?

7 **A.** I was asked questions by Mr. Colantonio at that
8 deposition, yes.

9 **Q.** Okay. And are you aware that Mr. Colantonio is also
10 counsel to Cabell County and City of Huntington in this
11 matter?

12 MR. FARRELL: Objection. Lack of foundation.

13 THE COURT: Overruled.

14 BY MS. MAINIGI:

15 **A.** I'm not aware of that, actually.

16 **Q.** Now, do you recall what year you were first retained as
17 an expert? Was it 2019?

18 **A.** It would be close to that.

19 **Q.** Now, do you recall speaking at a plaintiffs counsel
20 conference in 2018 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida?

21 **A.** If you could tell me more specifics about it, I used to
22 travel a lot in my role as the Commissioner for Bureau for
23 Public Health, so I'm happy to recall that, the details.

24 **Q.** Sure. Let's go ahead and put that up on the screen and
25 see if it jogs your memory. We can back up to the Opioid

1 Crisis Summit, July 21st-22nd, 2018. Do you recall speaking
2 at this conference called the Opioid Crisis Summit,
3 July 21st-22nd in 2018?

4 **A.** I would have traveled there in my capacity as the
5 Commissioner of Bureau for Public Health. Again, my
6 schedule travels.

7 **Q.** Are you aware that the purpose of this conference was
8 explaining to plaintiffs firms how to make money in mass
9 tort cases?

10 **A.** No.

11 **Q.** But your testimony is you traveled there as the
12 Commissioner of Public Health?

13 **A.** My testimony is that I was asked to speak specifically
14 about the opioid crisis in West Virginia to -- to this
15 meeting and in that role I was traveling to many
16 conferences, including the American Automobile Association
17 and, you know, a number of other organizations that were not
18 pure public health. That was the role I was -- and this was
19 in that role.

20 **Q.** Now, if we look at the second page of this --

21 MS. MAINIGI: Matt, if we we could turn to the
22 next page.

23 BY MS. MAINIGI:

24 **Q.** Were you aware that people paid \$1,495.00 to attend
25 this conference?

1 **A.** No, I was not aware.

2 **Q.** Were you aware that the purpose of the conference was
3 to teach plaintiffs lawyers how to file more opioid cases?

4 **A.** No, Ms. Mainigi. My role as Commissioner for Bureau
5 for Public Health is to go speak and talk about the public
6 health impact of the opioid crisis in West Virginia. When I
7 get invited, I will go speak and explain what is happening
8 in order to advance the knowledge and understanding of all
9 types of people from the country and I do not go back to
10 figure out who is paying what and who is there. I just --
11 that's not what I did in my role.

12 MS. MAINIGI: If we could turn to the agenda of
13 events, please, Matt. Next page, please. If we could go to
14 the next page, please. Okay. Maybe you can blow that up a
15 little bit, Matt.

16 BY MS. MAINIGI:

17 **Q.** And so, do you see your name here as one of the
18 speakers, Dr. Gupta?

19 **A.** This is the first time I've seen this, so I'm happy, if
20 you have paperwork, to look at that because I have never
21 seen this particular agenda before, but I do see my name
22 there.

23 **Q.** Okay. And do you see that at the bottom of this page
24 it says as follows: "Attorneys in attendance will be given
25 specific information regarding the signing of both entity

1 and individual cases, regarding case criteria, damage models
2 and estimated time frames for settlement"? Do you see that?

3 **A.** I see it, but this is my first time seeing it.

4 **Q.** So, is it your testimony you weren't aware that the
5 purpose of the conference was to educate plaintiffs
6 attorneys to bring opioid cases?

7 **A.** I was absolutely not aware of that.

8 MS. MAINIGI: I have no further questions. Thank
9 you, Dr. Gupta.

10 MR. FARRELL: Judge, before Ms. Mainigi retires,
11 can we get a copy of the demonstrative that was just --

12 MS. MAINIGI: I'm happy to provide a copy.
13 Actually, for housekeeping purposes, Your Honor, it may be
14 simpler if I -- if Mr. Hester is going next, if I provide a
15 list -- we provide a list together at the end of the
16 exhibits we'd like to move into evidence. Would that --

17 THE COURT: Is that all right with you, Mr.
18 Farrell?

19 MS. MAINIGI: Just to save time.

20 MR. FARRELL: I'd like do it now. I'd like to
21 make a record, as well.

22 MS. MAINIGI: Sure. Sure. Absolutely.

23 Your Honor, I'd like to move Senate Bill 437 into the
24 record. That is DEF-WV-03105.

25 THE COURT: Any objection?

1 MS. KEARSE: No objection, Your Honor.

2 THE COURT: It's admitted.

3 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT DEF-WV-03105 ADMITTED**

4 MS. MAINIGI: I'd like to move Senate Bill 454
5 into the record. That is DEF-WV-03015.

6 THE COURT: Any objection?

7 MS. KEARSE: No objection, Your Honor.

8 THE COURT: Admitted.

9 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT DEF-WV-03015 ADMITTED**

10 MS. MAINIGI: I'd like to move the 2016 SEMP
11 Guidelines into the record. That is DEF-WV-03036.

12 MS. KEARSE: No objection, Your Honor.

13 THE COURT: Admitted.

14 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT DEF-WV-03036**

15 MS. MAINIGI: I'd like to move into the record
16 DEF-WV-00747, which is the Public Health in West Virginia
17 Brief History and Current State of Health.

18 MS. KEARSE: No objection.

19 THE COURT: Admitted.

20 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT DEF-WV-00747 ADMITTED**

21 MS. MAINIGI: And I believe that's it, Your Honor.
22 Thank you.

23 THE COURT: Thank you.

24 MR. FARRELL: I'm sorry. Did we get the CLE
25 program admitted?

1 MS. MAINIGI: He didn't recognize it, so I didn't
2 move it into the record, but I'm happy to move it into the
3 the record, if you would like.

4 THE COURT: Do you want it in, Mr. Farrell?

5 MR. FARRELL: I just want a copy, is all I would
6 like.

7 MS. MAINIGI: We'll get him a copy right here and,
8 Your Honor, could I go ahead and just ask that that also be
9 moved into the record, that agenda?

10 THE COURT: Is there any objection?

11 MR. FARRELL: None.

12 THE COURT: It's admitted.

13 MS. KEARSE: Can I object?

14 COURTROOM DEPUTY CLERK: Judge, we need a number,
15 an exhibit number.

16 THE COURT: We need exhibit numbers.

17 MS. MAINIGI: Yes, Your Honor.

18 THE COURT: Can you give those to the clerk so she
19 can keep her record straight?

20 MS. MAINIGI: Oh, 861. That sounds more like it.
21 So, Opioid Crisis Summit, July 21st-22nd, 2018 is
22 Exhibit 861.

23 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT 861 ADMITTED**

24 MR. HESTER: Your Honor, should I go ahead now or
25 do you want to take a break?

1 THE COURT: Well, it's only 10:00. Let's press
2 on, Mr. Hester, if you're ready.

3 MR. HESTER: We'll press on. All right. Just
4 take us a minute, Your Honor, to get set up.

5 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

6 **BY MR. HESTER:**

7 **Q.** Good morning, Dr. Gupta.

8 **A.** Good morning.

9 **Q.** My name is Timothy Hester. I represent McKesson.

10 Dr. Gupta, I want to begin just by asking a couple of
11 threshold questions where I think we can have pretty ready
12 agreement. Do you agree with me that licensed doctors and
13 other healthcare providers in West Virginia are responsible
14 for making prescribing decisions?

15 **A.** Yes.

16 **Q.** And so, the number of prescriptions written in
17 Huntington and Cabell County for prescription opioids would
18 be based on the decisions made by doctors and other
19 prescribers, correct?

20 **A.** The number of prescriptions that would -- would be
21 going to pharmacies would be coming out of offices of
22 healthcare providers.

23 **Q.** So, based on the judgment of healthcare providers,
24 doctors, and other prescribers, correct?

25 **A.** I would say they were the ones writing the

1 prescriptions.

2 **Q.** And so, they were the ones making the decision to write
3 the prescriptions, correct?

4 **A.** That would be accurate.

5 **Q.** And so, you also agree and understand that an opioid
6 pill cannot leave a pharmacy lawfully unless a prescriber
7 decides to write a prescription and the pharmacist decides
8 to dispense it, correct?

9 **A.** That would be accurate.

10 **Q.** So, the number of prescriptions written in Huntington
11 and Cabell determines the amount of legal opioid pills that
12 would have been dispensed in the community, correct?

13 **A.** That would not be correct.

14 **Q.** The pills can't leave the pharmacy shelf unless
15 prescriptions are written for them, correct?

16 **A.** That's correct.

17 **Q.** And so, the total volume of prescriptions would be
18 total volume of pills that would be -- would reflect the
19 total volume of pills that could leave the pharmacy,
20 correct?

21 **A.** That's correct.

22 **Q.** Let me ask you to return a bit to the discussion you
23 just had with Ms. Mainigi relating to pain needs in West
24 Virginia. Do you agree that West Virginia historically has
25 had a very significant proportion of its population engaged

1 in labor-intensive jobs such as mining?

2 **A.** That would be correct.

3 **Q.** And are those labor intensive jobs a factor that have
4 tended to drive higher levels of pain needs in this state?

5 **A.** I would characterize it a different way, so I could not
6 exactly agree with that characterization.

7 **Q.** You understand that heavy manual labor jobs tend to
8 create over time higher needs for pain in a given
9 population?

10 **A.** I do not understand the term "higher needs for pain".

11 **Q.** Let me ask to -- let me put up on the screen the 2016
12 deposition pages, Page 68 Line 6 to 15, please. And, Dr.
13 Gupta --

14 MS. KEARSE: Your Honor, I'm going to -- is this
15 impeachment? I don't know that he's actually set a
16 foundation.

17 MR. HESTER: I think the witness said he didn't --
18 wouldn't characterize the question the way I asked him and
19 this is meant to respond to that.

20 MS. KEARSE: And I think --

21 THE COURT: He hasn't identified the document and
22 related it to this witness, is that what you're saying?

23 MS. KEARSE: Yeah. I think he was about to
24 explain his answer with that and so, I don't think this is
25 proper impeachment.

1 THE COURT: Overruled. I'm going to let him go
2 ahead. This is cross examination. We need to give Mr.
3 Hester some latitude here.

4 So, go ahead, sir.

5 BY MR. HESTER:

6 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, you were deposed in 2016 in this litigation.
7 Do you remember this?

8 **A.** I remember being deposed. I do not remember signing an
9 errata statement to review this deposition and correct it to
10 the accuracy of my deposition. So, I cannot speak to this
11 because I have not signed an errata statement and I have not
12 reviewed the deposition.

13 MR. HESTER: Well, Your Honor, if the witness --
14 if the witness didn't sign an errata statement, it's been
15 waived by now.

16 THE COURT: Well, is this -- is this the testimony
17 you gave in this deposition?

18 THE WITNESS: Your Honor, I was -- I did not -- I
19 was deposed. I never signed an errata statement, so I have
20 never had an opportunity to go back and review my deposition
21 of 2016.

22 THE COURT: Well, I understand that, but if you
23 testified under oath and this is your testimony, then I
24 think this is fair game.

25 Go ahead, Mr. Hester.

1 BY MR. HESTER:

2 Q. Dr. Gupta, you were under oath when you gave this
3 testimony, correct?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And the testimony, the question was, "Has, or how would
6 you characterize the rate of -- let me use the words
7 legitimate pain in West Virginia." Do you see that
8 question?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And your answer was, "I would characterize it by the
11 following. There's reason to believe, certainly, that
12 because of the, the mining and number of other labor
13 activities, that West Virginians have, traditionally have
14 had a lot of laborious work in the industry. And, as a
15 result, that one can argue that, historically, that could be
16 higher levels of pain related to the work in those
17 industries." You gave that answer, correct?

18 A. Yes, sir, and that's very different than the question
19 you asked me previously about pain needs.

20 Q. I was asking you, Dr. Gupta, this question. The
21 laborious work done by many people in this state, mining,
22 heavy labor, that's a factor that can lead to higher levels
23 of pain need, correct?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. Okay, thank you. Let me ask you, also, do you

1 understand that West Virginia has a relatively aged
2 population?

3 **A.** It has one of the more aged populations in the nation
4 as a state.

5 **Q.** And that's another factor that can lead to higher pain
6 needs for a population, correct?

7 **A.** Mr. Hester, you keep saying "pain needs" and there's a
8 big difference between words, between "pain needs" and
9 "levels of pain". I would -- either you could correct it or
10 I could keep having problems.

11 **Q.** Okay. So, maybe we'll go -- we'll try to get on the
12 same wavelength.

13 **A.** Please.

14 **Q.** That -- and more aged population tends to have higher
15 levels of pain, correct?

16 **A.** This is the way I would characterize it. As we age,
17 one could have pain levels that could be higher, generally
18 speaking, than when you are very young.

19 **Q.** I think we're communicating. I understand. I hope. I
20 know what you're talking about.

21 And I think with Ms. Mainigi, you also noted that there
22 is a higher level of disability among the population in West
23 Virginia than compared to the nation, correct?

24 **A.** The percent of disability rates in West Virginia are
25 higher than the average U. S. percentage rates.

1 **Q.** And people who are disabled in the aggregate may have
2 higher levels of pain; is that correct?

3 **A.** That's correct.

4 **Q.** And you also talked with Ms. Mainigi about the fact
5 that there's higher levels of obesity in West Virginia
6 compared to the country as a whole; is that correct?

7 **A.** That's correct.

8 **Q.** And obesity is another factor that can lead to higher
9 levels of pain; is that correct?

10 **A.** Not necessarily, but from obesity, if you end up having
11 neuropathy, or disability, or arthritis, that may be a
12 reason that you're suffering from pain, but just by itself,
13 obesity, being obese, many of us are here, shouldn't be
14 causing us pain.

15 MR. HESTER: Let me ask to put up on the screen
16 from the 2016 deposition of Dr. Gupta Page 69, Lines 20-24.

17 BY MR. HESTER:

18 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, you were under oath again in this
19 deposition, correct?

20 **A.** Correct.

21 **Q.** Let me read the question that was asked to you in that
22 deposition. "Obesity can cause pain of various types,
23 right?" And your answer was, "It certainly could." And
24 then the next question, "Chronic pain, constant pain?" Your
25 answer, "It could." Do you see that?

1 **A.** Yes, sir. My testimony today is a very consistent
2 explanation with this testimony at that time.

3 **Q.** But the point is, if somebody -- if there is a level of
4 obesity in a population, that can create greater strains on
5 the skeletal structure of the body, can lead to higher
6 levels of pain, correct?

7 **A.** Can I characterize this way? Just -- I just -- I'm
8 just trying to explain, which is in its black and white way,
9 no, but obesity tends to change our body structure over time
10 and we call that potentially sometimes arthritis. Other
11 cases, obesity could lead to cancer. In other cases, it
12 could lead to diabetes, which could lead to neuropathy. So,
13 these are factors, but just pure simple being obese if I'm
14 overweight right now does not cause pain for just itself.

15 **Q.** So, other factors come out of obesity that lead to
16 higher levels of pain; is that your point?

17 **A.** That potentially could, just like I said in 2016.

18 **Q.** And you also mentioned arthritis as another factor for
19 the health of this population in West Virginia, that West
20 Virginia has the highest level of arthritis in the country,
21 correct?

22 **A.** That's correct.

23 **Q.** And arthritis is often associated with pain; is that
24 correct?

25 **A.** That's very correct.

1 **Q.** The West Virginia Board of Medicine oversees the
2 practice of medicine in the State of West Virginia, correct?

3 **A.** It sees it for MDs, for podiatrists, and for physician
4 assistants. Not for all practitioners.

5 **Q.** So, let's focus on the ones that the West Virginia
6 Board of Medicine regulates and the regulation of the West
7 Virginia Board of Medicine, for instance, would extend to
8 general care practitioners, family doctors, primary care
9 physicians, correct?

10 **A.** As long as you had an MD, as opposed to a DO, which
11 have their own Board for DOs.

12 **Q.** So, the Board of Medicine of West Virginia would be
13 regulating doctors in the state and would issue their
14 licenses to practice medicine; is that correct?

15 **A.** For the ones that have MD, yes.

16 **Q.** And you're aware that the Board of Medicine from time
17 to time issues guidelines or policy statements that it
18 circulates to doctors in West Virginia?

19 **A.** Yes.

20 **Q.** And the Board of Medicine over time has issued policy
21 statements relating to the use of opioids in the treatment
22 of pain; is that correct?

23 **A.** Yes.

24 **Q.** And a doctor practicing in West Virginia should be
25 familiar with the guidelines and policy statements that were

1 issued by the Board of Medicine; is that correct?

2 **A.** That would be correct.

3 **Q.** And a doctor practicing in West Virginia should seek to
4 follow the guidelines and policy statements that are issued
5 by the Board of Medicine; is that correct?

6 **A.** You are correct.

7 **Q.** And are you also aware that the Board of Medicine
8 issues quarterly newsletters to all licensed physicians and
9 physician's assistants in the State of West Virginia from
10 time to time?

11 **A.** I'm peripherally aware to the point it comes to my
12 e-mail inbox.

13 **Q.** You probably receive them.

14 **A.** Yes. It doesn't mean I read them, though, always.

15 **Q.** Yes. Let me ask you to look at a document I'm going to
16 show you.

17 MR. HESTER: May I approach, Your Honor?

18 THE COURT: Yes.

19 BY MR. HESTER:

20 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, I've shown you a document that's marked as
21 Defendant's Exhibit 3616. It's a quarterly newsletter from
22 the West Virginia Board of Medicine from 2009, early 2009 or
23 I guess -- I'm sorry -- late -- late October, October, 2008
24 and December, 2008. Have you seen this before?

25 **A.** No, sir, primarily because I wasn't in state in

1 December -- on October of 2008. I had not moved in until
2 March of 2009.

3 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at this, the sixth page of the
4 document. Do you see at the bottom of the page there is a
5 heading "Responsible Opioid Prescribing, A Physician's
6 Guide, now available for online purchase"? Do you see that?

7 **A.** I see that.

8 **Q.** And there's a reference, if you look down into the next
9 paragraph of the document, that it says in the Spring of
10 2008, the Board of Medicine was able to distribute a book to
11 every licensed physician and physician's assistant in West
12 Virginia, and it's a book written by Scott Fishman. I'm
13 paraphrasing, Dr. Gupta. Do you see that paragraph?

14 **A.** I see that paragraph.

15 **Q.** And I really wanted to use this as a jog for your
16 memory to see if you remember. Do you remember that the
17 West Virginia Board of Medicine distributed this book by Dr.
18 Fishman on responsible opioid prescribing?

19 **A.** Absolutely not, sir, because I wasn't in state and I
20 wasn't licensed at the time, so I would not have received
21 this newsletter, and I would never have read this prior to
22 you showing it to me.

23 **Q.** And so, you have never in your -- in your subsequent
24 work in the state, you hadn't heard about this being
25 distributed, the book being distributed?

1 **A.** Not to my recollection at this time, but I can
2 certainly not -- I do not remember seeing this document ever
3 before.

4 **Q.** All right. Thank you.

5 Dr. Gupta, am I correct that in recent years there has
6 been an effort to educate doctors in West Virginia to think
7 more carefully about their prescribing of opioids?

8 **A.** That would be correct.

9 **Q.** And that's something that you've been involved in,
10 correct?

11 **A.** That would be correct.

12 **Q.** And, for instance, in the 2012-13 time frame, West
13 Virginia established mandatory training for all prescribers
14 on opioid prescribing; is that right?

15 **A.** I think we discussed it this morning.

16 **Q.** And before that time there was no such mandatory
17 training; is that correct?

18 **A.** That's correct.

19 **Q.** And I take it over time with more training, more
20 knowledge, better use of the databases that you've discussed
21 earlier today, that doctors in West Virginia in this current
22 time frame are, in fact, writing fewer prescriptions for
23 opioids; is that right?

24 **A.** That would be correct. Yes, sir, that would be
25 correct. And, again, to the context of the training,

1 legislature, Board of Medicine tend to usually do
2 reactionary work, so this was a reaction to the challenge we
3 were facing.

4 **Q.** So, there has been a significant decline in the levels
5 of opioid prescribing in recent years, correct?

6 **A.** Yes.

7 **Q.** Is it correct to say it's roughly a 50% decline in
8 opioid prescribing over the last decade?

9 **A.** If we speak specifically about West Virginia, I think
10 there has been quite significant decline. In fact, between
11 2014 and 2019, in my estimate, there was about 52% decline.

12 **Q.** In the levels of prescribing of opioids?

13 **A.** Opioid prescribing.

14 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at another document that you've
15 discussed before but we haven't gotten it into the record
16 yet.

17 MR. HESTER: May I approach, Your Honor?

18 BY MR. HESTER:

19 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, I've handed you Defendant's Exhibit 2523.
20 On the front page, it's headed "CDC Guideline For
21 Prescribing Opioids For Chronic Pain, United States, 2016."
22 Dr. Gupta, I take it you've seen this document before?

23 **A.** Yes, sir.

24 **Q.** And these are the CDC guidelines that you discussed in
25 your testimony over the last two days, correct?

1 **A.** That's accurate.

2 **Q.** And the CDC published these guidelines in March, 2016?

3 **A.** That's correct.

4 **Q.** And I -- the way you spoke about them, I assume this is
5 true, but I'll ask you anyway. I assume you've read these
6 guidelines, correct?

7 **A.** It's been awhile since my last review, but yes.

8 **Q.** And these are the guidelines that you referred to in
9 your testimony yesterday when you mentioned the CDC
10 guidelines, correct?

11 **A.** For chronic pain, 2016, yes.

12 **Q.** And if you look at Page 2 of these guidelines and, Dr.
13 Gupta, I should explain. There's a lot of numbers on these
14 documents because we're in litigation here. But why don't
15 you work off of the printed number that's really the number
16 of the document, the number that the CDC put on it. So.
17 There's a number 2 there you can see. We can work off of
18 that, okay?

19 And you can -- let me point you to the right-hand
20 column on Page 2. The beginning of the first full paragraph
21 that says, "This guideline provides recommendations for the
22 prescribing of opioid pain medication by primary care
23 clinicians for chronic pain, I.e., pain conditions that
24 typically last more than three months." Do you see that?

25 **A.** I do.

1 **Q.** And is that your understanding of what this document
2 was about, that it was to provide guidelines for the
3 prescribing of opioids by primary care clinicians?

4 **A.** My understanding was these guidelines were primarily
5 directed at primary care physicians and for chronic pain for
6 opioids, the role of opioids.

7 MR. HESTER: Your Honor, I move that Defendant's
8 Exhibit 2523 be admitted into evidence.

9 THE COURT: Is there any objection?

10 MR. FARRELL: I'm sorry. Are we talking about --

11 MS. KEARSE: The CDC guidelines.

12 MR. FARRELL: No objection.

13 MS. KEARSE: No objection.

14 THE COURT: It's admitted.

15 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT 2523 ADMITTED**

16 BY MR. HESTER:

17 **Q.** Let me ask you to look, Dr. Gupta, at Page 1 of the
18 document. And I wanted to point you to the left-hand column
19 at the end of the first paragraph under background. And
20 there's this last phrase that says the CDC refers to the,
21 quote, "lack of consensus among clinicians on how to use
22 opioid pain medication." Do you see that?

23 **A.** I am seeing this as a part of a full sentence.

24 **Q.** Yes, yes, yes. I mean, feel free to look at the whole
25 sentence. I just wanted to ask you about that phrase.

1 **A.** I read the sentence.

2 **Q.** Yes. And when the CDC refers here to a lack of
3 consensus among clinicians on how to use opioid pain
4 medication, when it wrote these guidelines in 2016, that was
5 a correct statement, right?

6 **A.** A lack of consensus among physicians is very different
7 than the science and data behind the evidence to support use
8 of opioids for chronic pain. I would have to go back and
9 see their reference because there's one reference here that
10 says in parentheses, too, and I would have to see what type
11 of evidence are they referring to when they make that claim.

12 **Q.** So, you don't know whether it's true or not when they
13 refer to a lack of consensus among clinicians about how to
14 use --

15 **A.** So, it's not about black and white, I know or I don't
16 believe it or not. It is about evidence. If there is a
17 certain amount of evidence that I can put my weight behind,
18 then I would agree with the statement. If it's referring to
19 one meaning, then I would have trouble agreeing with that.

20 **Q.** It refers -- if you look at Footnote 2, it refers to
21 the Palouse article or epidemiological study. Have you
22 looked at that Palouse article before?

23 **A.** I haven't recently and I would have to look at that
24 before I can -- because, again, that's a statement based on
25 a reference and I would have to evaluate the reference for

1 its legitimacy, credibility, as well as validity and
2 science, before I can agree to that.

3 **Q.** Maybe we can back up a little bit. When the CDC issues
4 a guideline like this, it's issuing the guideline for the
5 medical community to provide its base of knowledge on how it
6 views the situation at a point in time, correct?

7 **A.** That would be correct.

8 **Q.** So, this --

9 THE COURT: Mr. Hester, when you get to a stopping
10 point, we need to switch out the court reporters and it
11 would be a good time to take a break.

12 MR. HESTER: Yes. I'm happy to stop now, Your
13 Honor, if that's good for you.

14 THE COURT: Let's be in recess for about ten
15 minutes.

16 (Recess taken)

17 BY MR. HESTER:

18 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, right before we broke I was asking you
19 the point that the CDC when it issues a guideline like
20 this is providing its view to the medical community on
21 where the state of knowledge lies; correct?

22 **A.** This is how I would characterize it. Once CDC issues a
23 guideline on any matter, they're using the best possible
24 available science and data to put together it into a
25 recommendation which are voluntary in nature.

1 **Q.** And the purpose of the CDC guidelines is to inform the
2 medical community based on the work that the CDC puts in to
3 develop that insight and guidance?

4 **A.** Medical community, the public at large because these
5 are public guidelines, they're not secretive guidelines, to
6 the entire nation.

7 **Q.** And, so, for instance, to reflect that point, if you
8 look at Page 3 of the document, at the top of the right-hand
9 column it says, "The guideline is intended to inform
10 clinicians who are considering prescribing opioid pain
11 medication for painful conditions that have or become
12 chronic."

13 Do you see that?

14 **A.** I see that.

15 **Q.** So it reflects the point I think you're making that the
16 CDC develops guidelines like this to provide information to
17 clinicians who are considering the prescribing of opioids;
18 correct?

19 **A.** That's correct.

20 **Q.** So when the CDC said at Page 1, going back to where we
21 were before the break, when it says there's a lack of
22 consensus among clinicians on how to use opioid pain
23 medication, that's the CDC's view based on its study and
24 evaluation of the current state of the science; correct?

25 **A.** Not really, sir. That's background introduction. So

1 what they're saying is here's what exists in literature
2 right now. It would be hard to pin that to CDC because what
3 they're providing you as a nation is here's where we are
4 today. And they are regurgitating whatever they find. It's
5 not -- background is not somebody's view particularly.

6 **Q.** Okay. Let me turn you then -- maybe I can make that
7 sharper and make the point a little more clearer if we turn
8 to Page 2.

9 At the top of the left-hand column there's a sentence
10 that begins -- it's the second or third full sentence on the
11 left-hand column. It begins, "However, it is hard to
12 estimate the number of persons who could potentially benefit
13 from opioid pain medication long-term."

14 Do you see that?

15 **A.** I see that.

16 **Q.** And I take it that's the CDC's judgment based on what
17 they've looked at. They concluded it was hard to estimate
18 the number of persons who could potentially benefit from
19 long-term care?

20 **A.** That statement would, if you were to characterize it,
21 would mean that CDC does not have a really good estimate of
22 the -- amongst all the people that are suffering from
23 chronic pain as to in what percentage of people you could or
24 could not have benefit from chronic long-term opioid care.

25 **Q.** And they go on to say, "Evidence supports short-term

1 efficacy of opioids for reducing pain and improving function
2 in non-cancer, nociceptive, and neuropathic pain in
3 randomized clinical trials lasting primarily less than 12
4 weeks." Correct?

5 **A.** That's a statement along with two references.
6 Reference does not intend, in parentheses, to cite the
7 evidence.

8 **Q.** So there the CDC was concluding that there was evidence
9 of short-term efficacy of opioids for treating chronic
10 non-cancer pain in durations of less than 12 weeks; correct?

11 **A.** Durations of less than 12 weeks would not be chronic
12 non-cancer pain. You mentioned chronic non-cancer pain.
13 What they're saying is that -- and I want to read that
14 because it's important.

15 "The efficacy -- short-term efficacy of opioids for
16 reducing pain and improving function in non-cancer,
17 nociceptive, and neuropathic pain." So they're also saying
18 not all pain, but these two types of pain in randomized
19 clinical trials. That's less than 12 weeks.

20 **Q.** And nociceptive means what?

21 **A.** What it means where actually you have receptors that
22 actually could react to it. And neuropathic, obviously
23 we've talked about from the nerve involvement and things
24 like that.

25 **Q.** So those two phrases together, nociceptive and

1 neuropathic pain, that's a broad category of pain; correct?

2 **A.** Those are two reasons, particular reasons that
3 clinicians might find an opportunity at some level of their
4 management of that patient to prescribe for short-term the
5 pain. And they go on to state when the opioid should be
6 prescribed.

7 **Q.** So here the CDC finds that there is evidence to support
8 short-term efficacy of opioids for treatment of these
9 categories of pain in durations of less than 12 weeks;
10 correct?

11 **A.** They do that. And the rest of the report, sir, they
12 say it's not first line. It's -- so that's a, that's a
13 statement and it's weighted as a statement only. It's not a
14 finding. It's a statement, a regurgitation of two studies.

15 **Q.** Based on their review of all of the scientific evidence
16 that was available at the time; correct?

17 **A.** I would generally say so. They would have studied it.

18 **Q.** And then the next sentence goes on to say, "However,
19 few studies have been conducted to rigorously assess the
20 long-term benefits of opioids for chronic pain." And then
21 in parentheses they say "pain lasting more than three
22 months."

23 Do you see that?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** So, again, here the CDC was reporting that the state of

1 the knowledge at the time based on its review reflected that
2 there were few studies reflecting in a rigorous way the
3 long-term benefit?

4 **A.** Yes.

5 **Q.** And then I put that together with the statement up
6 above where they say, "It's hard to estimate the number of
7 persons who could benefit from opioid medication long-term."

8 So putting those together, the CDC was saying there's
9 just not enough science yet to decide what the answer is for
10 long-term pain treatment with opioids; correct?

11 **A.** This is the way I would characterize it. What they
12 were saying is that the data on long-term benefits of opioid
13 use is there, but it is not entirely sufficient. And,
14 therefore, these guidelines and that gap would help
15 providers fill that gap in terms of recommendations.

16 **Q.** So the CDC was saying there is some data suggesting
17 benefits for long-term pain but it's not clear enough?

18 **A.** They're not really saying that in that statement.

19 **Q.** But it -- okay. I'll get to it another way. I think
20 we can get to this point another way.

21 When -- let me point you to Page 2 again, the
22 right-hand column toward the bottom just before "rationale,"
23 Dr. Gupta.

24 You see there's a sentence -- it's the third sentence I
25 think from the bottom of that paragraph before "rationale."

1 It begins, "Clinical decision-making should be based on a
2 relationship between the clinician and patient, and an
3 understanding of the patient's clinical situation,
4 functioning, and life context."

5 Do you see that?

6 **A.** Yes.

7 **Q.** And here the CDC was saying ultimately the decision on
8 using opioids for chronic pain treatment should be entrusted
9 to the decision of a doctor acting in concert with the
10 patient; correct?

11 **A.** That's broadly correct.

12 **Q.** And they go on at the end of that paragraph to say,
13 "Clinicians should consider the circumstances and unique
14 needs of each patient when providing care."

15 Do you see that?

16 **A.** I do see that.

17 **Q.** So the point the CDC was making there is that judgments
18 about whether or not to prescribe opioids for individual
19 patients should be made by the individual doctor taking
20 account of all of the patient circumstances; correct?

21 **A.** What they were trying to say was these guidelines are
22 voluntary to help physicians make better, more informed
23 decisions while they're managing their individual patients
24 in a doctor/patient, physician/patient relationship.

25 **Q.** And another way to put that might be the decision

1 ultimately had to be the doctor in consultation with the
2 patient on whether or not to use opioids for chronic --

3 **A.** That's --

4 **Q.** -- pain?

5 **A.** That's true. The decision -- it has to be informed by
6 the best available science and, and it cannot be exclusively
7 by the doctor and the patient without any knowledge of the
8 current science and recommendation that exists nationally.

9 **Q.** And that was the purpose for which they issued these
10 guidelines; correct?

11 **A.** Yes, sir.

12 **Q.** And then if, if we go to Page 17 of the document --

13 **A.** Yes, sir.

14 **Q.** -- and I think we're on the same page here, Dr. Gupta,
15 but I just wanted to make sure. There's a heading at the
16 right -- at the left-hand side that says "Determining When
17 to Initiate or Continue Opioids for Chronic Pain."

18 Do you see that heading?

19 **A.** I do.

20 **Q.** And, so, here the CDC in these guidelines was not
21 apprising clinicians that they should not use opioids for
22 chronic pain; correct?

23 **A.** That would be a reasonable conclusion.

24 **Q.** The CDC, in fact, was contemplating that clinicians
25 armed with this evidence could decide properly to initiate

1 opioid treatment for chronic long-term non-cancer pain;
2 correct?

3 **A.** The CDC was saying that there are several
4 non-pharmacological options as well as non-opioid
5 pharmacological options available at the behest of the
6 doctor prior to jumping to opioids for the use of chronic
7 pain. And that's kind of what the message here is. But not
8 to say that they should not use it.

9 **Q.** Shouldn't -- yeah, that's -- I understand that the CDC
10 was giving guidance to clinicians that they should think
11 about other options too for the treatment of chronic
12 non-cancer pain; correct?

13 **A.** Correct.

14 **Q.** But the CDC was contemplating that it was appropriate
15 for clinicians armed with sufficient knowledge and
16 information to prescribe prescription opioids for chronic
17 non-cancer pain; correct?

18 **A.** The CDC was saying that in certain positions, it is
19 appropriate with certain factors to -- for utilizing opioid
20 therapy for chronic pain.

21 **Q.** And that judgment would be left to the doctors armed
22 with knowledge the CDC was providing and in consultation
23 with their patients; correct?

24 **A.** That judgment would -- physicians with these specific
25 tools and information and science that the CDC was providing

1 to, to be able to provide the best, most current care to
2 their patient.

3 **Q.** And the CDC guidelines did not suggest any limits on
4 using opioids for the treatment of acute pain; correct?

5 **A.** These guidelines were not intended to focus on acute
6 pain.

7 **Q.** And the CDC has never issued guidelines trying to limit
8 or add to the base of knowledge around the treatment of
9 acute pain with prescription opioids; correct?

10 **A.** There's been a lot of discussions. To my knowledge, no
11 such guidelines have been forthcoming.

12 **Q.** And, so, to date, the CDC has not issued any guidance
13 to clinicians to suggest restricting the use of prescription
14 opioids for treating acute pain; correct?

15 **A.** I'm not aware of any.

16 **Q.** And when we speak about acute pain, we're speaking
17 generally of pain that lasts three months or less; correct?

18 **A.** When we're speaking of acute pain in the duration
19 aspect, you might -- you're correct. But also in an
20 individual specific person aspect, we're talking about when
21 you have broken bones, when you have operations and surgery.

22 So there are circumstances which you need it for --
23 certainly you need it, but definitely you need it for much,
24 much, much less than three months.

25 **Q.** And -- but just to make sure we're communicating with

1 each other, Dr. Gupta, the CDC has never issued a statement
2 saying you should not use prescription opioids as a first
3 line of treatment for acute pain?

4 **A.** I'm not aware of any such statements.

5 **Q.** It's also correct, Dr. Gupta, that the CDC did not say
6 in these guidelines that prescription opioids should never
7 be used during pregnancy; correct? I can point you to a
8 page so you don't have to guess.

9 **A.** Please point me to the page.

10 **Q.** Let's go to Page 26. This, this stood out at me, Dr.
11 Gupta, because of the discussion yesterday around NAS
12 babies. And I wanted to ask you about the discussion. It's
13 at the bottom of the right-hand column on pregnant women.
14 Do you see that?

15 **A.** I see that.

16 **Q.** And there's a sentence -- it's the third sentence down
17 under that heading where the CDC says, "Importantly, in some
18 cases, opioid use during pregnancy leads to neonatal opioid
19 withdrawal syndrome."

20 Do you see that?

21 **A.** I see that.

22 **Q.** And that's what you were discussing yesterday, this
23 problem of withdrawal symptoms for a child or a baby that's
24 exposed in utero to opioids; correct?

25 **A.** Yes. We were discussing the, the additional risks to a

1 pregnant mother in addition to an average non-pregnant
2 individual of which -- one of which was NAS.

3 **Q.** But here in the next sentence the CDC recognizes that
4 clinicians and patients together could decide to initiate
5 opioid therapy for chronic pain during pregnancy; correct?

6 **A.** That's correct.

7 **Q.** So the CDC here was saying you need to weigh risks and
8 benefits in initiating opioid therapy for chronic pain even
9 during the time a woman is pregnant; correct?

10 **A.** The CDC is saying that there may be extraordinary
11 circumstances in which chronic opioid therapy might be
12 needed in pregnancy. However, it is even a higher risk than
13 an average person. You should really have a discussion and
14 understand the science behind it before you do that.

15 **Q.** And the point I wanted to make is, and it's notable,
16 the CDC did not issue a recommendation saying you should
17 never use opioids while a woman is pregnant?

18 **A.** That's correct.

19 **Q.** And, again, the CDC was leaving the judgment of whether
20 to use opioids to the decision made jointly by a doctor in
21 consultation with the patient; correct?

22 **A.** Correct, in the context of providing all the cautions
23 and evidence and knowledge that they could to the
24 clinicians.

25 **Q.** And that was what the CDC was trying to do here was to

1 flag this issue around the risks of NAS that could be
2 associated with using opioids during pregnancy?

3 **A.** Yes, amongst other poor outcomes of pregnancy as well.

4 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, let me ask you to look at a document that I
5 think you'll recognize.

6 Dr. Gupta, I've handed you Defendant's Exhibit 2556.
7 It's headed "State of West Virginia Board of Medicine Policy
8 on Chronic Use of Opioid Analgesics."

9 I take it you've seen this document before?

10 **A.** Yes.

11 **Q.** And it bears your signature; correct?

12 **A.** It does.

13 **Q.** And you were involved in developing this policy on the
14 chronic use of opioid analgesics?

15 **A.** I was the Secretary of the Board of Medicine as part of
16 my role as the Commissioner of the Bureau of Public Health.

17 **Q.** And, so, as part of that function, you were involved in
18 evaluating whether this made sense as a policy statement for
19 the State of West Virginia?

20 **A.** Yes.

21 **Q.** And the policy statement was intended to apprise
22 doctors and others involved in prescribing opioids on
23 standards which apply to the use of opioids in the State of
24 West Virginia?

25 **A.** It was -- yes, it was Board of Medicine's role that we

1 were trying to address this.

2 MR. HESTER: Your Honor, I would move Defendant's
3 Exhibit 2556 into evidence.

4 THE COURT: Is there any objection?

5 MS. KEARSE: No objection, Your Honor.

6 THE COURT: It's admitted.

7 BY MR. HESTER:

8 Q. And just to make it totally clear, this was adopted
9 on September 11, 2017; correct, Dr. Gupta?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And is this the most recent statement that's been
12 issued by the Board of Medicine concerning opioid
13 prescribing for chronic pain?

14 A. I would not be able to attest to this. I've been out
15 of the system since November of 2018.

16 Q. You're not aware of any other guidelines that have been
17 issued?

18 A. There may be some during the COVID period as part of
19 that, but I'm generally not aware of any other guidelines.

20 Q. And these guidelines apply only to the use of opioids
21 for treating chronic non-cancer pain; is that correct?

22 A. Let me remind myself.

23 (Pause)

24 Yes.

25 Q. And the guidelines were intended to provide guidance to

1 the doctors of West Virginia and others who prescribe
2 opioids on the standards they should follow when using
3 prescription opioids to treat chronic non-cancer pain; is
4 that correct?

5 **A.** That would be correct.

6 **Q.** And the guidelines do not preclude the use of opioids
7 for long-term treatment of chronic non-cancer pain; correct?

8 **A.** Correct.

9 **Q.** And the guidelines recognize that doctors can properly
10 make the decision to institute or commence opioid treatment
11 for chronic non-cancer pain if they follow the procedures
12 outlined in the guidelines; correct?

13 **A.** When it's appropriate, the doctors can do that, yes.

14 **Q.** And let me point you in particular to Page 8 of the
15 document. And, again, we can use the numbers on the, on the
16 document itself, not the production numbers.

17 And I wanted to point you, Dr. Gupta, in particular to
18 the first sentence under "Informed Consent and Treatment
19 Agreement."

20 And it reads, "The decision to initiate chronic opioid
21 therapy is a shared decision between the clinician and the
22 patient."

23 Do you see that?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** And, so, again, here it reflects advice from the Board

1 of Medicine that doctors should make the decision about
2 whether to prescribe opioids for chronic non-cancer pain in
3 consultation with the patient; correct?

4 **A.** The statement reflects a shared decision between the
5 clinician and the patient.

6 **Q.** And it reflects that the judgment ultimately about
7 whether to prescribe an opioid for any given patient should
8 be made as a consequence of that shared decision between
9 doctor and patient; correct?

10 **A.** It's a shared decision, that's correct.

11 **Q.** Let me point you to Page 2 of the document, Dr. Gupta.

12 There's -- it's in the second paragraph on that page.
13 There's a phrase -- and I'm going to read a phrase, but we
14 can look at the whole sentence if you want to, but I want to
15 focus on a phrase. It's the last phrase of that middle
16 paragraph.

17 It says, "The guidelines recognize the responsibility
18 of clinicians to view pain management as essential to
19 quality of medical practice and to the quality of life for
20 patients who suffer from pain."

21 Do you see that?

22 **A.** I see that.

23 **Q.** So here the Board of Medicine is giving guidance to
24 doctors and other prescribers in the State of West Virginia
25 that they should view pain management as essential to the

1 quality of medical practice; correct?

2 **A.** The guidelines are saying -- and I'll just repeat the
3 beginning of it because it's very important in the context
4 of the sentence that these guidelines do not encourage the
5 prescribing of opioids over other pharmacological and
6 non-pharmacological means of treatment but, rather, the
7 guidelines recognize the responsibility of clinicians to
8 view pain management as essential to quality of their
9 practice and the quality of life for patients who suffer
10 from pain.

11 **Q.** So -- right. Okay. Thank you. So, in other words,
12 the point is the guidelines were not espousing that one form
13 of pain treatment should be favored over another, but they
14 were highlighting that pain treatment is essential to the
15 practice of medicine; correct?

16 **A.** I would alter that a little bit. What the guidelines
17 are espousing is one form of treatment should be favored
18 over the other which is non-pharmacological and
19 pharmacological non-opioid treatment should be favored over
20 opioid treatment. Yet, the importance of managing and
21 addressing pain in a patient is also important.

22 **Q.** The guidelines also recognize that, in fact, doctors
23 armed with the proper knowledge could, in fact, properly
24 decide to initiate opioid treatment for chronic non-cancer
25 pain; correct?

1 **A.** The guidelines acknowledge that opioids are one of the
2 arrows in the quiver that should be taken out but not the
3 first arrow that should be taken out.

4 **Q.** And -- let's follow your metaphor. That's the first
5 time -- when these guidelines were issued in 2017 it's
6 correct that this is the first time there was a statement by
7 the Board of Medicine that prescription opioids should not
8 be the first arrow in the quiver?

9 **A.** To my knowledge. My tenure was between 2015 and 2018
10 on the Board. And I, I -- to my knowledge and recollection,
11 that was the first time following CDC guidelines that these
12 guidelines were issued.

13 **Q.** So these guidelines were really a follow-on or were
14 inspired by the CDC guidelines that we've already looked at;
15 correct?

16 **A.** Yes.

17 **Q.** The guidelines also make it clear that they're not
18 intended for the treatment of acute pain, management of pain
19 in the perioperative setting, emergency care, cancer related
20 pain or palliative care, end of life care; correct?

21 **A.** If you could point me to the page.

22 **Q.** Sorry, my apologies. It was the next paragraph down.
23 I had meant to point you there, Dr. Gupta. I forgot.

24 **A.** That's what it says, yes.

25 **Q.** So, in other words, the guidelines that were issued by

1 the Board of Medicine in 2017 only focused on using
2 prescription opioids for chronic non-cancer pain treatment;
3 correct?

4 **A.** Correct, because that's where the most volume of the
5 prescriptions were coming from.

6 **Q.** The, the guidelines were not intended to affect the
7 decisions that doctors were making in other settings in
8 using prescription opioids; correct?

9 **A.** The guidelines were intended generally to inform the
10 decisions the doctors were making over all the context of
11 opioids, but they were not specific to acute pain and other
12 settings as you've highlighted.

13 **Q.** And, and, so, the Board of Medicine has never issued
14 guidelines to doctors in West Virginia suggesting any limits
15 on the use of prescription opioids for the treatment of pain
16 in settings outside chronic non-cancer pain; correct?

17 **A.** The Senate Bill 273 which the Board of Medicine of West
18 Virginia and all the prescribing, boards of prescribers are
19 required to follow the state law. So that term -- I would
20 say that to the extent that the Senate Bill 273 requires
21 that certain prescription narrowing of that, that, that has
22 happened. But beyond that, the Board of Medicine has not,
23 in my knowledge and memory, has issued any such other
24 guidelines.

25 **Q.** So there was not an intention through these guidelines

1 to alter doctors' practices in relation to the use of pain
2 outside chronic non-cancer pain; correct?

3 **A.** That would be accurate.

4 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at -- do you have the exhibit
5 from your direct examination up there, Dr. Gupta?

6 **A.** Yes.

7 **Q.** So I wanted to have you look back at Plaintiffs'
8 Exhibit 44223.

9 **A.** I have it.

10 **Q.** And this is the January, 2018, Opioid Response Plan
11 that you commissioned; correct?

12 **A.** Correct.

13 **Q.** And I'd like to review some passages from this document
14 which you didn't have a chance to discuss yesterday with
15 Ms. Kearse.

16 Let me ask you to look at Page 4, Dr. Gupta.

17 **A.** I'm here.

18 **Q.** And it states -- and I wanted to point you to the
19 middle of the, middle of the paragraph under "Background."
20 I'm trying to find it. Okay.

21 The second sentence begins, "Initially, the overdose
22 death increases were driven by pharmaceuticals, first
23 methadone, which was prescribed for pain, and then
24 oxycodone, hydrocodone, and oxymorphone."

25 Do you see that?

1 **A.** Yes, I do.

2 **Q.** And then if you go two sentences down, it says, "In
3 2012 just as prescriptions for opioids were beginning to
4 decline, a major shift from pharmaceuticals to illicit drugs
5 began."

6 Do you see that?

7 **A.** I see that.

8 **Q.** That's a true statement; correct?

9 **A.** That's a true statement in the context of the other
10 statements that are also listed there.

11 **Q.** And then the, the next sentence reads, "The shift began
12 with heroin in 2012 and then shifted to fentanyl and
13 fentanyl analogues alone or in combination starting in
14 2014."

15 Do you see that?

16 **A.** I see that.

17 **Q.** And that's a true statement; correct?

18 **A.** That would be accurate.

19 **Q.** And the reference there to fentanyl and fentanyl
20 analogues are two illicit analogues that were being used by
21 drug dealers; correct?

22 **A.** The reference for both heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl
23 analogues alone or in combination is for non-prescriber
24 drugs.

25 **Q.** Or what we might call illicit drugs or illegal drugs?

1 **A.** Drugs that were not prescribed.

2 **Q.** I was just trying to make sure we were on the right
3 phraseology. These are illicit fentanyl or fentanyl
4 analogues; correct?

5 **A.** Yes.

6 **Q.** And I guess we can see that -- I could have answered
7 my own question with the next sentence. "The fentanyl
8 driving the unprecedented increase in deaths is illicitly
9 sourced and generally not of pharmaceutical origin."

10 Do you see that?

11 **A.** Yes, I see that.

12 **Q.** And that's the point you just made; correct? These
13 were, these were illicitly sourced fentanyl derivations;
14 correct?

15 **A.** That's exactly why I said non-prescriber drugs there,
16 yeah. That was my point.

17 **Q.** And, so, that's a true statement, that the fentanyl
18 driving the unprecedented increases in deaths was illicitly
19 sourced; correct?

20 **A.** Yes, that's a true statement in the context of most of
21 the time when people die from fentanyl, which is, I'm sure
22 the Court has heard, much more potent, is in combination
23 with heroin. It's not the heroin but the fentanyl that
24 kills them. That's my point.

25 **Q.** And the point you're making there, Dr. Gupta, is that

1 drug dealers often will spike or adulterate heroin with
2 fentanyl; correct?

3 **A.** Yeah, they call it on the street cut, cut the heroin
4 with fentanyl. So they could, they could be less -- it
5 could be cheaper to them. They can make more money off of
6 it.

7 **Q.** Cheaper because the fentanyl is cheaper than the
8 heroin. And, so, if they adulterate the heroin with
9 fentanyl, it's cheaper for the drug dealer?

10 **A.** So the fentanyl is a lot more potent, so you have to
11 use much more smaller amounts and you have to use heroin in
12 it. So if you cut it with fentanyl, you can save a lot of
13 cost of heroin. So that's exactly right.

14 **Q.** And the, and the fentanyl is, is typically -- the
15 illicit fentanyl in the country now is typically sourced out
16 of China and illegally smuggled to the U.S. Is that your
17 understanding?

18 **A.** My understanding is there are foreign nations that are
19 responsible for, for fentanyl in this country.

20 **Q.** And then, and then often times users may not even be
21 aware that a drug dealer has cut or adulterated the heroin
22 with fentanyl. The drug dealer might be doing that to save
23 cost without even telling the user. Correct?

24 **A.** That's the tragedy of all of those deaths as well.

25 **Q.** Let me ask you to turn to Page 7 of the document. I

1 wanted to point you toward the bottom of that page under
2 "Data and Evidence."

3 **A.** Okay.

4 **Q.** There's a first sentence that reads, "A critical factor
5 fueling the national opioid epidemic is the rapid rise in
6 opioid prescriptions for pain."

7 Do you see that?

8 **A.** Yes.

9 **Q.** And that's a true statement; correct?

10 **A.** Correct.

11 **Q.** And those are the decisions on opioid prescriptions
12 that we've discussed before that were being made by doctors;
13 correct?

14 **A.** The meaning of the statement is the total volume in
15 communities resulting from these prescriptions is resulting
16 in a lot of spreading or diversion of that, those
17 prescriptions and pills across populations that did not
18 intend to take those medications or they were not prescribed
19 for. So that's the meaning of that.

20 **Q.** But the, but the first point is when it refers here to
21 prescriptions, these are prescriptions being written by
22 doctors; correct?

23 **A.** That, that would be the -- these, these pills that are
24 out there legitimately or illegitimately are coming out of
25 pharmacies from prescriptions that are coming out of offices

1 of prescribers.

2 **Q.** And then I think this is the point you were just
3 making, Dr. Gupta. Let's look at the top of Page 8. It
4 says, "Excessive prescribing can lead to substance use
5 disorders directly, as the risk of developing such a
6 disorder increases with higher doses for longer durations,
7 or indirectly, as extra pills are provided to or stolen by
8 others."

9 I think that's the point you were just making; correct?

10 **A.** Yes, that's exactly the point I was making.

11 **Q.** And, so, let's, let's break that down into two halves.

12 First, it refers to excessive prescribing that leads to
13 substance use disorders directly. That's somebody taking
14 pills under a doctor's instruction who over time develop a
15 substance use disorder because they've taken it for too long
16 or in too high a dose; correct?

17 **A.** So the prescribing of this could happen because of good
18 doctors and bad doctors. And when bad doctors keep
19 prescribing high doses for a long time to people
20 unnecessarily, for that first part of the discussion,
21 substance use disorder can develop in those people as well.

22 **Q.** And there can also be circumstances where a good doctor
23 is trying to make good decisions but mistakenly leads
24 somebody into a substance use disorder because they've given
25 them too high a dose for too long; correct?

1 **A.** That would be much rarer as opposed to a pill mill
2 situation where a lot of bad doctors can produce a lot of
3 prescriptions in a short amount of time. And that could
4 overflow in volume to a lot of people, including their
5 patients. And they could -- all of them could end up
6 becoming -- suffering from substance use disorder.

7 **Q.** When, when you use this phrase "directly" here, you
8 mean people who are getting prescription opioids via a
9 prescription and using them, they're prescribed pills,
10 correct, whether by a legitimate doctor or a bad doctor?

11 **A.** Correct.

12 **Q.** Then "indirectly." I want to take the second half of
13 the reference here. You refer to "indirectly." And it --
14 again, to put it in context, excessive prescribing leads
15 indirectly to problems as extra pills are provided to or
16 stolen by others.

17 And the point you're making there is the doctor might
18 have a legitimate reason to prescribe a certain number of
19 pills, but prescribes many more, gives too many pills and
20 they end up in the medicine cabinet and get stolen or sold
21 or borrowed by somebody else. Correct?

22 **A.** Yeah. I can explain this really because I've lived
23 this.

24 So you could have good doctors. You could have bad
25 doctors. The good doctors could prescribe adequate

1 prescriptions or more than adequate prescriptions.

2 And in a good doctor case, which is less common, but if
3 you prescribe for a tooth pull 30 days worth of opioids at a
4 dentist, then those -- 29 days of that opioid is going to
5 sit in your closet. And your kids are going to get their
6 hands on it or somebody else is going to get their hands on
7 it.

8 The bad doctors are writing regularly and habitually a
9 large amount of prescriptions regardless of condition. And
10 those are primarily going to -- for people who don't need
11 them and were not prescribed.

12 **Q.** But either way, they're coming from a doctor, either a
13 good doctor who's writing a prescription and including too
14 many pills in that prescription or a bad doctor who's
15 willy-nilly sending out pills by prescription; right?

16 **A.** That's correct.

17 **Q.** And, so, let's focus on the good doctor. So the good
18 doctor who extracts -- well, I guess it's not going to be a
19 doctor. A dentist who extracts a tooth or a good doctor who
20 treats somebody who's got an ankle sprain and they give 30
21 days of pills when two days were necessary, those were
22 judgments being made by the doctors, correct, about how many
23 pills were warranted?

24 **A.** So the good doctor who writes a thirty-day prescription
25 to a high school football injury, a kid for 30 days who

1 didn't need it is someone who's writing that, that decision
2 is being made in context with the doctor and the patient
3 together.

4 However, it's influenced by a lot of other factors like
5 ultimately the judgment and decision is made by the doctor,
6 but the influence of that goes beyond just the physician,
7 just -- or just the prescriber.

8 **Q.** But the point I wanted to make is there, there was a
9 standard clinical practice for a number of years in West
10 Virginia and elsewhere to write prescriptions with too many
11 days of pills; correct?

12 **A.** I don't know if it was standard practice but, yes, the
13 culture was of -- typically would be that if you got a, you
14 know, a kid got a football injury or a tooth pulled, you
15 would easily write several more days of prescriptions than
16 you would require or evidence would suggest that you would
17 need.

18 **Q.** And, so, -- and, and that's the point made here in this
19 document, extra pills. When you refer there to "extra,"
20 you're talking about pills that weren't needed to treat the
21 pain for which they were prescribed; right?

22 **A.** So, so any pills that are used for any purpose other
23 than specifically for reasons are all illegitimate pills.
24 And that's part of the diversion.

25 **Q.** But you could have a good doctor who writes a perfectly

1 legitimate prescription for a knee sprain, but writes for
2 too many days; correct?

3 **A.** Correct. And all of those extra days are illegitimate
4 prescriptions and illegitimate dose and leads to diversion.

5 **Q.** Yeah. Maybe it's just this word "legitimate" or
6 "illegitimate," but it's a, it's a medical judgment that's
7 appropriate. The doctor might appropriately decide somebody
8 needed some pain pills for a knee sprain, but the doctor
9 gave too many days in that prescription; correct?

10 **A.** Yeah. It's, it's, it is possible. It's probable for a
11 good doctor to make a good sound judgment for the need of
12 opioids, but make a mistake on the duration of the need of
13 opioids.

14 So instead of three days, you write for 30 days, that's
15 a problem. And not everybody who does that is necessarily a
16 bad doctor or bad prescriber. That's what was happening.

17 **Q.** That was a common mistake in the medical profession;
18 correct?

19 **A.** It was. It was a behavior. It was a culture.

20 **Q.** It was a culture of writing too many days of pills for
21 a given need; correct?

22 **A.** A culture of attempting to reduce pain from a scale of
23 whatever to zero for every American, every West Virginian
24 that they could possibly do.

25 **Q.** But I'm focusing particularly on this point about the

1 culture of writing more days than was needed. If the kid
2 has a high school knee sprain, the kid's not going to need
3 30 days of pills, but the doctors were often writing 30 days
4 of pills; correct?

5 **A.** So, Mr. Hester, you have to look for the intent behind
6 that. What's the intent of a good physician? Physicians
7 don't go through medical school, residency, Board of
8 Medicine, license to hurt their patients.

9 So the intent here was because the belief was you have
10 to bring the patient down from whatever level to zero. So
11 intent was good for good doctors. Yet, because of that
12 intent, they perhaps wrote for longer than they should have
13 written for.

14 **Q.** And now what we ended up with is a whole series of
15 these. We take all those prescriptions that were written by
16 all these doctors that were for too many days, and what we
17 end up with in the aggregate is a lot of pills that are in
18 medicine cabinets or drawers of people's homes and they end
19 up then out in the community; correct?

20 **A.** So all of these prescriptions -- and, and I go back to
21 the pill mills and bad doctors because that's where the
22 volume is. It's going on and they were all going to the
23 pharmacy and they were all being brought in and they were
24 dispensed and that's exactly where they end up as you
25 stated.

1 **Q.** Let me ask you to look just a little further down on
2 this same page. It's in "Discussion and Recommendations."

3 And there you say in the first sentence, "The most
4 promising approaches to opioid prescribing combine education
5 and tools for all prescribers with an enhanced enforcement
6 for the relatively few prescribers who are violating
7 standards of care."

8 Do you see that?

9 **A.** I do.

10 **Q.** And I think this is exactly what we were talking about,
11 Dr. Gupta, but let me just confirm it.

12 When you talk about a promising approach to address
13 opioid prescribing is education and tools for all
14 prescribers, that was to address the problem of the good
15 doctor who was writing for too many days; correct?

16 **A.** Correct, and, and also make sure that the bad doctors
17 were understanding that these tools and other things were
18 available as well.

19 **Q.** Exactly. So for all doctors, the point was educate
20 them more that if you've got a kid with a high school knee
21 injury, don't send him home with 30 days of pills. Send him
22 home with a fewer number of days of pills. Correct?

23 **A.** We believe if we can help educate doctors and other
24 prescribers and provide those tools, especially in terms of
25 the best knowledge in opioid prescribing, it would help make

1 a dent in the entire volume problem.

2 And then we'd be left with the bad doctors and we would
3 have to obviously -- the second statement, part of the
4 statement says "enhance enforcement." It would help us get
5 better control over the bad doctors.

6 **Q.** But let's keep focusing on the good doctors. I haven't
7 asked you about the bad doctors. But on the good doctors,
8 you've actually seen this play out, haven't you, that this
9 thinking that you have has led to a significant reduction in
10 opioid prescribing levels in West Virginia because doctors
11 become better educated. Correct?

12 **A.** I would say amongst a number of other factors.
13 Clearly, the education, the tools have been helpful in
14 reducing and changing the culture of, of writing large
15 prescriptions, high dose for long periods.

16 **Q.** Let's talk about the second half. There's a reference
17 to enhanced enforcement for the relatively few prescribers
18 who are violating standards of care. Do you see that?

19 **A.** Yes.

20 **Q.** So when you say there are relatively few prescribers
21 who are violating the standards of care, your point is most
22 prescribers thought they were doing the right thing with the
23 standard of care at the time and there were relatively few
24 who weren't?

25 **A.** Yeah. There were more prescribers trying to do the

1 right thing than those who weren't, meaning in West Virginia
2 there were more good doctors than bad doctors at any one
3 point in time.

4 **Q.** Most of the doctors thought they were doing the right
5 thing. As you said, they were sending somebody home trying
6 to treat their pain. They thought they were doing the right
7 thing, but they were giving too many pills.

8 **A.** Their intent was to help their patient because that was
9 the culture. That was the education. That was the
10 influence. That was their understanding.

11 **Q.** And, and you and others in the State of West Virginia
12 have worked on changing that culture of prescribing behavior
13 to tighten it up; correct?

14 **A.** We have tried to do our best.

15 **Q.** But -- again, at the end of the day, you ultimately
16 have to rely on the good judgment and thoughtful approach of
17 individual doctors to get prescribing under control;
18 correct?

19 **A.** Yes, but there's a number of factors that influences
20 that judgment.

21 One of those things we did in Bureau of Public Health
22 was we began something called counter-detailing. This is,
23 this is our folks going to doctors' offices and providing
24 them this education and tools, knowing there was already
25 detailing happening that was telling them the other way

1 around for years.

2 So one of the things we would do is academic detailing.
3 So instead of pharmaceutical detailing, we were doing
4 academic detailing. That's actually a term. And we were
5 doing that because this was part of the education, as we
6 discussed, to get those doctors to understand the science,
7 the evidence. It was a tool they need to be able to more
8 judiciously prescribe opioids.

9 **Q.** That was a statewide program you ran?

10 **A.** Yes.

11 **Q.** And did it help?

12 **A.** We believed so.

13 **Q.** And the way it helped was doctors then had more
14 knowledge about imposing reasonable limits on how many days
15 of prescriptions they would write?

16 **A.** We were sharing the best practices, science that was
17 available with doctors attempting to get them to take the
18 best possible care of their patients with, within safety and
19 efficacy, safety from opioids and understanding addiction
20 but, at the same time, understanding that here are all these
21 non-pharmaceutical options. Here are all the pharmaceutical
22 non-opioid options. And then you think about opioids.

23 **Q.** And then going back to the relatively few, the other
24 side of the coin, the relatively few prescribers who were
25 violating the standards of care, it's only been a handful of

1 really bad doctors in this state who drove a lot of volume;
2 correct?

3 **A.** There have been shut-downs of these pain pills, but
4 they had a tremendous lot of volume that was going through.
5 And those shut-downs, as I've stated before, has led to a
6 lot of that transition of people from pills to heroin.

7 **Q.** I wanted to ask you just about the shut-downs, though.
8 How many were shut down?

9 **A.** I don't have an exact number. I do know that there
10 have been several.

11 But one other important thing also I want to mention is
12 because we're a border state, we're not a state by itself,
13 we have other states. And when those shut-downs happened,
14 the people that live in West Virginia, it affects people
15 because some of our people have been not only within state
16 but they were going out-of-state to get these. So the
17 shut-down affects not just the ones in West Virginia but
18 also in contiguous states.

19 **Q.** So it needs to be a multi-state process to deal with
20 issues of the opioid crisis?

21 **A.** It is certainly a national crisis, as we discussed.
22 West Virginia is at ground zero.

23 **Q.** The -- you said it's -- you're only aware of a handful
24 of doctors who are violating the standards of care?

25 **A.** I don't have exact numbers, but what I would say to you

1 is, is there's a faction of doctors who we disciplined at
2 the Board of Medicine. There's another set of doctors
3 who -- and businesses with pill mills were shut down
4 legally.

5 And when that information comes to our knowledge, both
6 at the Board of Pharmacy as well as the Board of Medicine,
7 we do take action.

8 **Q.** And, and can you think of any in recent years or is
9 this back more in time?

10 **A.** I don't have any in recent years to speak of.

11 **Q.** Most of what you're talking about with shutting down
12 doctors was back a number of years; correct?

13 **A.** During my tenure is when I'm talking about.

14 **Q.** All right. Let me ask you, Dr. Gupta, to look at
15 Plaintiffs' Exhibit 41913. This was the White Paper, the
16 Need for Harm Reduction Programs in West Virginia. Do you
17 have that one?

18 **A.** Yes, sir.

19 **Q.** I, I have just a few simple questions on this. You'll
20 recall discussing this document yesterday with Ms. Kearse?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** And this Harm Reduction Program is one that's focused
23 on persons who inject drugs; right?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** And, so, I wanted to make sure we knew where, where the

1 focus is for a program like this on harm reduction.

2 So it's -- this is exclusively dealing with people who
3 inject drugs?

4 **A.** Yes.

5 **Q.** And, so, that would include heroin users or people who
6 are abusing prescription opioids by crushing them and
7 injecting them?

8 **A.** Yes, or, or meth or other substances. The idea here of
9 a Harm Reduction Program is to, you know, set up several
10 strategies that I mentioned yesterday.

11 One of those were to provide people clean, free
12 syringes so they are not at risk of spreading infectious
13 diseases.

14 Another one is to make sure they screen for hepatitis
15 and HIV. Another one is to give them immunizations, the
16 shots, so they don't develop disease. Another one is family
17 planning. And another important one is make sure that
18 people are connected to help to get treatment.

19 **Q.** But, but in particular, I wanted to say that in
20 relation to anybody who's using prescription opioids, these
21 would be people misusing prescription opioids who would be
22 covered by this program; correct?

23 **A.** In the context of what we discussed, these are the
24 people who were illegitimately using prescriptions or using
25 non-prescribed medications.

1 **Q.** Because they would be -- for instance, with a
2 prescription opioid, they would be crushing or otherwise
3 turning it into a powder that they could then inject;
4 correct?

5 **A.** Yes, sir. And that would be illegitimate use of
6 prescription pills.

7 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at your 2016 Overdose Fatality
8 Analysis. It's Plaintiffs' Exhibit 44211. Do you have that
9 one in your stack?

10 **A.** Yes, I do.

11 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at Page 8, please.

12 **A.** I'm here.

13 **Q.** And there's a sentence -- you may have talked about
14 this yesterday. I'm not sure. But there's a sentence that
15 says -- under "Overdose Trends in West Virginia" about four
16 sentences down, it says, "Approximately 705 (85 percent) of
17 the overdose deaths that occurred in West Virginia were
18 opioid related."

19 Do you see that?

20 **A.** I see that.

21 **Q.** And I just wanted to clarify as a matter of
22 phraseology, when you refer in this paper to opioids, you're
23 talking about heroin, illicit fentanyl, prescription opioids
24 that are being misused. That's all within this opioid
25 phraseology. Correct?

1 **A.** Correct.

2 **Q.** If you could look at the next page, Page 9. And,
3 again, I think this is, this is easy given what we've
4 discussed, but I just wanted to make it clear.

5 There's a paragraph that begins, "Since 2014 the
6 percent of overdose deaths in West Virginia involving
7 fentanyl or fentanyl analogues has increased tremendously
8 from nine percent of overdose deaths involving fentanyl or
9 fentanyl analogues to 41 percent of overdose deaths in
10 2016."

11 Do you see that?

12 **A.** I see that.

13 **Q.** And that's a correct statement?

14 **A.** That's a statement -- correct statement, and it's in
15 the context of we're finding most that fentanyl or fentanyl
16 analogues as part of heroin, which that trend, as we
17 discussed, went from 2012 to 2013. So just to add, the 2012
18 to 2013 trend, heroin, and then from 2014 we started to see
19 fentanyl come into it.

20 **Q.** And this is the illicit fentanyl we've been discussing
21 that's used to cut or adulterate heroin?

22 **A.** Yes.

23 **Q.** And then further down in that same paragraph there's a
24 reference to a cluster of non-fatal overdoses that occurred
25 in August, 2016, in Cabell County. Do you see that?

1 **A.** I see that, yes.

2 **Q.** And that's the, that's the cluster investigation that
3 you discussed yesterday with Ms. Kearse; right?

4 **A.** Yes.

5 **Q.** And here it indicates that there was evidence that a
6 high-potency synthetic opioid had entered the local illicit
7 drug supply and contributed to these overdoses; correct?

8 **A.** Yes, carfentanil, which we also know as elephant
9 tranquilizer. That was one.

10 **Q.** So that's the, that's the -- fentanyl or carfentanil,
11 that was the drug that led to that cluster of overdoses in
12 August, 2016?

13 **A.** That three cases out of the total of 20 cases in that
14 one particular overdose.

15 **Q.** Well, in the prior sentence it says a high-potency
16 synthetic opioid had entered the drug supply contributing to
17 20 persons overdosing within a 53-hour period. Do you see
18 that?

19 **A.** I do see that. And following that it says three cases
20 were positive for carfentanil. So what we could find was
21 three cases out of 20.

22 **Q.** But then the rest, the rest of that cluster was
23 attributed to some other high-potency synthetic opioid;
24 correct?

25 **A.** Yes, and that fentanyl is included in that.

1 **Q.** So the carfentanil is even more potent. It's used to
2 tranquilize elephants?

3 **A.** Yes. And we put that three people there because
4 pleasantly we were kind of surprised that they didn't die
5 because carfentanil, you don't live to tell about it
6 generally.

7 **Q.** It says here in the paper it's estimated to be 10,000
8 times more potent than morphine; is that correct?

9 **A.** That's correct.

10 **Q.** And, so, carfentanil is being used by drug dealers to
11 adulterate heroin?

12 **A.** We have seen evidence in spotty places. It's rare, but
13 we are seeing elephant tranquilizers at occasional places
14 show up.

15 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at Page 10 of the document,
16 please. This is discussing maternal drug use and Neonatal
17 Abstinence Syndrome. Do you see that, that section?

18 **A.** Yes.

19 **Q.** And we, we've talked about this a little bit already in
20 relation to the CDC guidelines. But I wanted to make clear
21 how NAS occurs. And, again, as we were discussing, NAS is
22 something that afflicts a baby who's exposed to opioids in
23 utero; correct?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** And am I right, Dr. Gupta, that there's two ways that

1 that could happen? One way is a doctor prescribes opioids
2 for a medical purpose during a woman's pregnancy; correct?

3 **A.** Yes.

4 **Q.** The other way is a woman is misusing prescription
5 opioids for a non-medical purpose not under doctor's
6 instructions during pregnancy; correct?

7 **A.** That's one of the, one of the second ways and -- yes.

8 **Q.** Those are the only two ways that NAS would occur;
9 correct? Either the doctor has instructed that opioids be
10 used, even though the woman is pregnant, or the woman is
11 misusing opioids during pregnancy?

12 **A.** With relation to prescription drugs, yes.

13 **Q.** So that -- there's no other way that NAS occurs. The
14 baby has to be in utero during the time the woman is using
15 the prescription opioids; correct?

16 **A.** In relation to prescription opioids, that's correct.

17 **Q.** And in relation to illegal drugs, it sounds like you're
18 drawing a distinction. You're suggesting that NAS could
19 occur for a baby through an illegal drug even if the woman
20 isn't using the illegal drug during pregnancy?

21 **A.** Certainly, NAS is basically a withdrawal. What the
22 baby -- so when the cord is cut, you separate the baby from
23 the mom. And just like an adult, if you were to stop
24 somebody who was using substances every day, they would
25 undergo withdrawal because of the dependency. So does the

1 poor baby.

2 And, so, that withdrawal can happen if the mother was
3 using prescription opioids, if the mother was using
4 illegitimately prescription opioids, or the mother was using
5 illicit opioids, knowing that heroin is also an opioid.

6 **Q.** Right. So, so the point is when we see a baby with
7 NAS, that NAS could have resulted from the mother using
8 heroin during pregnancy; correct?

9 **A.** Technically you're correct. But what we saw in West
10 Virginia was that the increased use of prescription opioids
11 were not exclusively to non-pregnant people.

12 So with increased use of West Virginians for opioids,
13 we also saw a parallel increase in pregnant people with
14 opioids as well. So we saw that trend happen.

15 **Q.** And, again, just to make it clear, the NAS would occur,
16 that increase would occur either because the woman was
17 misusing prescription opioids during pregnancy or a doctor
18 had told the woman to use prescription opioids during
19 pregnancy. That's the way it happens.

20 **A.** Or illicitly or a combination of all of those, so two
21 more things on there.

22 **Q.** And, of course, when a baby has NAS, we don't know
23 where the mom sourced the opioid. We don't know whether it
24 was an illegal heroin. We don't know if it was an illicitly
25 trafficked prescription opioid. We don't know where it came

1 from. We just know the baby has been exposed to an opioid.

2 **A.** We know because we are able to then match that mother
3 with the Controlled Substance Monitoring Program and see
4 what she was prescribed. So we are able to tell that.

5 **Q.** But there will be -- there's a number of cases, I take
6 it, that you've seen where the baby has NAS but the mother
7 was not prescribed an opioid during pregnancy?

8 **A.** That would be the part of the diversion of those
9 prescriptions or illicit use, but that does exist.

10 **Q.** And is the percentage of, of babies with NAS more
11 attributable to women who have been told by a doctor to use
12 a prescription opioid during pregnancy or to women who are
13 misusing prescription opioids that have been diverted?

14 **A.** So as you mentioned that only a certain percentage of
15 women that are using substances will the kids of theirs
16 develop NAS.

17 What we found is about 14.7 percent of women had a
18 positive uterine test for a controlled substance. And, of
19 course, only five percent developed NAS.

20 So NAS is one that's not a one-to-one relationship with
21 use. But -- so it's very hard to say that this percentage
22 is because of that because what we do see is overall, the
23 number of pregnant people using prescriptions, whether
24 legitimately or illegitimately, went up relatively
25 proportionally to the general population.

1 **Q.** Your, your expectation is that most of the NAS that
2 you've seen would be the consequence of misuse of
3 prescription opioids by women who are pregnant?

4 **A.** Use or misuse.

5 **Q.** It would have to be one or the other; correct?

6 **A.** In most cases.

7 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at Page 33 of this document,
8 please. And I wanted to point you, Dr. Gupta, to Figure 20
9 at the top of Page 33. This shows drug category by decedent
10 age group. Do you see that?

11 **A.** I see that.

12 **Q.** And, so, where we -- if we look -- let's just focus on
13 a column. Let's look at the 25-to-34-year-old column. And
14 it shows that the illicit use is the blue bar, the one at
15 the bottom. And then there's an Rx only and then there's a
16 multi-category. Do you see that?

17 **A.** Yes.

18 **Q.** And, so, when it says "illicit only," that would mean
19 that these were decedents who only had an illicit drug in
20 their system at the time of death?

21 **A.** That's correct.

22 **Q.** And that would be heroin or fentanyl or some other
23 illicit drug; correct?

24 **A.** Correct.

25 **Q.** And then the Rx only, that would, that would be

1 referring to somebody who had a prescription opioid in their
2 body at the time of death; correct?

3 **A.** That would be correct.

4 **Q.** But we would not know from looking at the decedent, we
5 wouldn't know whether they sourced that from a drug
6 trafficker, whether they had taken that prescription opioid
7 out of somebody else's medicine cabinet, or bought it on the
8 street. We wouldn't know. All we can tell is that they
9 have a prescription opioid in their system; correct?

10 **A.** That's correct except that at the beginning of the
11 report I think somewhere we said in the decedents, I think
12 it was 36 percent, but almost a third of decedents had
13 prescription drugs in their system but didn't have a
14 prescription for it. So we do have a broad understanding of
15 diversion.

16 **Q.** But, but somebody could have a prescription for
17 prescription opioids but might have overdosed by buying a
18 whole bunch of additional opioids on the street; correct?

19 **A.** That's possible.

20 **Q.** So you can't really tell from whether somebody has a
21 prescription whether they -- if they, if they took 20
22 prescription opioids and died, they might have gotten 19 of
23 those on the street and one from a doctor. Correct? You
24 just can't tell.

25 **A.** Yeah. And that kind of goes back to the behavior and

1 the pattern. The pattern is that those individuals would
2 have a likelihood of using, you know, the doctor's
3 prescription, the street prescription, and multiple other
4 things.

5 **Q.** And, so, the point is we can't tell from looking at
6 when it says Rx only here, this small little orange bar in
7 the middle, we can't tell whether that's, in fact, a
8 legitimate prescribed opioid that led to a death and, in
9 fact, the likelihood would be it's misused opioids.
10 Correct?

11 **A.** It, it could be, but there's no way to prove one from
12 the other, as you stated.

13 **Q.** And then the, the gray bar at the top, that's
14 multi-category. That means it's, it's multiple, different
15 kinds of drugs. And as you pointed out yesterday, the
16 average is over three different drugs that are found in
17 decedents at the time of death; correct?

18 **A.** Correct. And that could include, once again, the Rx.
19 So that could include prescribed drugs as well.

20 **Q.** So if we add it up, I, I tried to figure this out. It
21 looks to be 95 percent in that 25 to 34 age group. 95
22 percent either had multiple drugs in their system at the
23 time of death or only illicit. Correct?

24 **A.** That's what it about seems like.

25 **Q.** Let me ask you to go to your Historical Overview, the

1 Plaintiffs' Exhibit 41213, please. I just have a few
2 questions on this, Dr. Gupta.

3 If you could look at Page 3 of this document. And this
4 shows the drug overdose maps that you discussed with
5 Ms. Kearse yesterday; right?

6 **A.** Yes.

7 **Q.** These maps are not limited to prescription opioids;
8 correct?

9 **A.** These are not limited to prescription opioids, correct.

10 **Q.** So these are, these are, in fact, all drug overdoses
11 from any kind of drug; correct? Cocaine, methamphetamine,
12 prescription opioids, heroin, fentanyl, all of them are
13 included; correct?

14 **A.** Correct.

15 **Q.** And they would certainly include people who have
16 overdosed on heroin or carfentanil or anything else;
17 correct?

18 **A.** Correct. And that's why it's important to understand
19 the trends over time, not one particular area, but over time
20 what happened because some of these things transition from
21 one to the other.

22 **Q.** The, the -- let me ask you to look at Page 3 in the
23 first paragraph.

24 **A.** Page 3?

25 **Q.** Yes, same page. We don't have to move. And there's a

1 sentence that says, "In 2015 there were 5,000 opioid deaths
2 attributed to powerful synthetic opiates (fentanyl) creating
3 an increase of 75 percent from 2014."

4 Do you see that?

5 **A.** Yes.

6 **Q.** And that's what we've been discussing. That's
7 typically going to be an adulterated heroin that's been
8 adulterated with fentanyl; correct?

9 **A.** Correct. And, and this is at a national level that
10 we're reading out. And what we're seeing is the very same
11 thing we've been talking about. In 2012, 2013, a trigger
12 happened to heroin. And in 2014 almost we had started to
13 see increases in contamination of that heroin with the
14 synthetic opioid called fentanyl which is much more potent,
15 much more deadly.

16 **Q.** And is it your understanding that the spike in heroin
17 that you started seeing in 2012, 2013, one factor in that
18 spike was that there was an increased purity and a reduction
19 in price of heroin in West Virginia?

20 **A.** You said increased purity and reduction in price?

21 **Q.** Both.

22 **A.** So in any market in illicit, the price depends on
23 demand. So, so the point becomes that demand and supply are
24 very important factors. So the purity is obviously
25 controlled beyond those elements. But the price is usually

1 dependent on what the demand is.

2 **Q.** But I wanted to ask you specifically, are you aware
3 that in 2012, 2013 there was a, an increase in the purity of
4 heroin in West Virginia?

5 **A.** I'm not aware that there was -- specifically in that
6 year it was much more pure than previously, but I'm aware
7 generally around that period that there was purity,
8 increased purities of heroin.

9 **Q.** And, and were you also aware that the increased purity
10 was accompanied by a reduction in price in heroin in West
11 Virginia? Were you aware of that?

12 **A.** By the fact we were seeing people transition to cheaper
13 alternatives readily available, we surmised that it is much
14 cheaper at the time, heroin is, as opposed to --

15 **Q.** I was asking about the price of heroin.

16 **A.** Yes, yes.

17 **Q.** You knew the price of heroin had declined?

18 **A.** I wasn't aware acutely that the price in 2012, '13 had
19 declined. I'm not aware of that specifically. I'm aware
20 generally.

21 **Q.** Generally that the price of heroin had gone down?

22 **A.** Generally, price is affordable as opposed to purchasing
23 prescription pills on the market.

24 MR. HESTER: Move to strike, Your Honor. I just
25 asked the witness about the price of heroin.

1 THE COURT: Just try to answer the precise
2 question, Dr. Gupta.

3 BY MR. HESTER:

4 Q. So you're aware that the price of heroin has been
5 reduced while the purity of heroin has increased in West
6 Virginia over the last number of years?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Let me ask you to turn to Page 5 of this document,
9 please, Dr. Gupta. And, and this is a chart I believe you
10 discussed yesterday with Ms. Kearse, Figure 3. Do you see
11 that?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And I wanted to confirm again, just like the CDC maps
14 we were looking at on Page 3, this is not limited to
15 overdoses of opioids; correct?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. It includes overdoses from all drugs?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. And that would include illegal drugs such as heroin and
20 illicit fentanyl as we've been discussing?

21 A. Correct.

22 Q. And then let me ask you to look at Figure 8, Page 7.
23 This is another table you discussed with Ms. Kearse
24 yesterday; right?

25 A. Yes.

1 **Q.** And this again is, is relating to all drug overdoses in
2 West Virginia. It's not confined to opioid overdoses.
3 Correct?

4 **A.** This particular figure is.

5 **Q.** It's headed "Total Drug Overdose Deaths by Range."
6 This is not -- this is all drug overdoses; correct?

7 **A.** Yeah, this particular one is, yes.

8 **Q.** Okay. Thank you. That's what I thought. I just
9 wanted to confirm. So it includes deaths from cocaine,
10 methamphetamine, other drug overdoses aside from opioids?

11 **A.** Yes.

12 **Q.** And it would also include heroin and illicit fentanyl
13 overdoses; correct?

14 **A.** This would include all overdose deaths, this particular
15 one.

16 **Q.** Let me ask you to look at Figure 11 which is I think on
17 Page 10. So this one is headed "Oxycodone Related Overdose
18 Death." Do you see that?

19 **A.** Yes.

20 **Q.** And this would include people who at the time of death
21 had multiple drugs in their system, one of which was
22 oxycodone; correct?

23 **A.** This particular figure talks about only oxycodone
24 related overdose deaths.

25 **Q.** Well, is it sourced, is it sourced from the table from

1 the same West Virginia death certificates you've discussed
2 previously in the report?

3 **A.** Let me look at that.

4 (Pause)

5 So you would have to add up the years for oxycodone,
6 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. So I'm going to do that to make
7 sure those are right.

8 **Q.** Let me make sure I know what you're doing. Are you
9 looking at Table 1, the oxycodone line in Table 1?

10 **A.** Yes. And we should be able to add the four years from
11 2012 to 2015. That number should come to 755. And if
12 that's the case, then that's appropriate.

13 **Q.** But I'm not saying it's appropriate or inappropriate.
14 I just wanted to make sure we knew what we were looking at.

15 The Table 1 where people who have oxycodone in their
16 system at the time of death, they could also have other
17 drugs in their system at the time of death; correct?

18 **A.** They potentially could, but these are the opioids
19 recorded on the West Virginia death certificates for those
20 individuals.

21 **Q.** No, but look at the paragraph above Table 1 explains
22 that --

23 **A.** Yes.

24 **Q.** This reflects people who might have multiple drugs in
25 their system at the time of death. And it lists oxycodone

1 if that was one of the drugs in their system. Correct?

2 **A.** Yes, they could. My response is they could, but it
3 does not mean they did always.

4 **Q.** But the point I'm trying to get to is that Figure 11
5 where you're showing these deaths by age range, that's going
6 to include people who had other drugs in their system,
7 heroin, fentanyl, as well as prescription opioids at the
8 time of death. It includes those numbers.

9 **A.** So, so I just, for the Court's understanding, when we
10 state on death certificates this particular oxycodone as
11 opposed to heroin, it is a clinical judgment of the Office
12 of the Chief Medical Examiner that the cause of death was
13 oxycodone. Now, --

14 MR. HESTER: Move to strike, Your Honor. That's
15 not responsive to my question.

16 MR. FARRELL: Your Honor, if I may.

17 THE COURT: Mr. Farrell.

18 MR. FARRELL: I think it was exactly responsive,
19 Your Honor.

20 THE COURT: Well, I think he was explaining his
21 answer. I'm going to let him go ahead.

22 THE WITNESS: So just trying to explain, so the
23 Chief Medical Examiner in the state has to make a decision
24 ultimately what is the responsible cause on the death
25 certificate because it has its own consequences.

1 So those are the causes. These people can have -- they
2 could have other substances found.

3 So when we take that and look at the oxycodone for
4 the -- from 2012 to 2015, that's what you're seeing on
5 Figure 11.

6 So to answer your question, theoretically they could.
7 I'm not opposing that at all. But the predominant cause of
8 death are these substances, the oxycodone.

9 BY MR. HESTER:

10 **Q.** Well, let me look -- let me ask you to look at Page
11 8. At the top of the page above Table 1 there's a
12 sentence that reads, "Due to the fact that most drug
13 overdose deaths involve multiple substances,
14 (polypharmacy) any individual death may involve multiple
15 types of drugs."

16 Do you see that?

17 **A.** That's accurate.

18 **Q.** And you agree with that; correct?

19 **A.** Yes.

20 **Q.** And then in the table there's a specific point made
21 that the bottom number doesn't add up to the, to the --
22 because you could have multiple drugs in somebody's system
23 at the time of their death; correct?

24 **A.** Yes, Mr. Hester. We still have to at the end of the
25 day make a decision: What killed the person. You can have

1 three things, four things, but you still have to figure out
2 what caused the ultimate death. And this is what this is.

3 **Q.** The -- so you could have an individual who had heroin,
4 oxycodone, and fentanyl in their system at the time of death
5 and there, there's a chemical comparability to those;
6 correct?

7 **A.** Correct.

8 **Q.** And you have testified previously, I believe, that it's
9 difficult to, to tell which drug is which because they break
10 down in the same ways in the body; correct?

11 **A.** What I'm -- so what I'm -- my response is this. That
12 for the Chief Medical Office to decide -- Chief Medical
13 Examiner's Office to decide it's oxycodone, if someone had
14 in their system codeine, oxycodone, and tramadol, when you
15 use three different drugs, they would be able to tell.

16 The reason that's important is then you can judge the
17 patterns over the years; what drugs are causing death in
18 2011, what drugs are causing death in '12, '13. So if we --
19 if we attributed every drug in the system to all deaths, we
20 would never be able to examine and understand better what
21 are the trend lines in the state of deaths. So this is,
22 this is the fundamental principle.

23 **Q.** My question was a little different. My question was I
24 believe you've testified previously that when heroin,
25 oxycodone are in somebody's system, they, they decompose or

1 they interact in the body in the same way and it's difficult
2 to separate one from the other; correct?

3 **A.** Yes.

4 **Q.** So, so you could have somebody and these numbers could
5 include somebody who's got heroin in their system and
6 oxycodone in their system and fentanyl in their system and
7 they're all opioids, but they're -- and it's very difficult
8 to separate the three because they, they have the same rough
9 chemical composition; correct?

10 **A.** So, Mr. Hester, for the benefit of the Court, can I
11 just explain in a non-technical way what happens in a death?

12 **Q.** No, I need you to answer my question.

13 THE COURT: Just answer his specific question,
14 please.

15 THE WITNESS: It's possible.

16 BY MR. HESTER:

17 **Q.** And when we're looking at these, at this bar chart
18 on Figure 11, we, of course, don't know --

19 THE COURT: It's a little after noon, Mr. Hester,
20 so whenever you, you're ready to get to a point where you
21 want to stop.

22 MR. HESTER: I had I think two or three more
23 questions, Your Honor, and then I can stop --

24 THE COURT: Go ahead.

25 MR. HESTER: -- and have a nice lunch. I'll just

1 take three or so minutes.

2 THE COURT: Okay.

3 BY MR. HESTER:

4 Q. When you say that it -- when we look at this bar
5 chart, Figure 11, we don't know whether these deaths
6 were from people who misused oxycodone. We don't know
7 where they got the oxycodone that's listed here in this
8 bar chart; correct?

9 A. We would not be able to tell that.

10 Q. Okay. One more question, or one more set of questions.

11 On Exhibit P-44227, this is the Viral Hepatitis
12 Epidemiological Profile.

13 A. I have it.

14 Q. I want to just point you to Page 6 on this document,
15 please.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. I'm sorry. It's Page -- yes, on Page 6.

18 MR. HESTER: Your Honor, I should probably stop
19 because I'm not as well organized on this document as I
20 should be and I can just clean this up.

21 THE COURT: All right. We'll be in recess until
22 2:00.

23 And I hate to make you come back, Dr. Gupta.

24 THE WITNESS: It's okay, Your Honor. Thank you.

25 MR. HESTER: Thank you, Your Honor.

1 MS. KEARSE: Your Honor, I think for timing
2 purposes, we'll have about maybe 30 minutes. I'm going to
3 have some questions. Mr. Farrell may have a couple
4 questions, but just so the Court's timing. But what I've
5 got is 30 minutes of redirect and we should be done this
6 afternoon, Your Honor.

7 THE COURT: Well, you're going to cross-examine,
8 too, are you not?

9 MS. CALLAS: Yes, we are, Your Honor.

10 MS. KEARSE: I'm sorry. Nevermind.

11 MS. CALLAS: That's all right.

12 THE COURT: All right. I'll see everybody at
13 2:00.

14 (Recess taken at 12:06 p.m.)

15 THE COURT: You have some more questions, Mr.
16 Hester?

17 MR. HESTER: Just a few, Your Honor. Just a few.

18 THE COURT: Okay.

19 BY MR. HESTER:

20 **Q.** Good afternoon, Dr. Gupta.

21 **A.** Good afternoon.

22 **Q.** I just have a few questions. We spoke this morning
23 about NAS. Do you recall that discussion generally?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** And I just wanted to clarify one thing. Am I -- it's

1 correct that a number of different kinds of drugs can cause
2 NAS; is that right?

3 **A.** Correct.

4 **Q.** And that includes heroin and illicit Fentanyl?

5 **A.** Correct.

6 **Q.** Cocaine?

7 **A.** It may be.

8 **Q.** Barbiturates?

9 **A.** I do not have a lot of experience with data on that,
10 but potentially.

11 **Q.** Antidepressants can also cause NAS?

12 **A.** I do not -- I'm not aware of specific data to that at
13 this point.

14 **Q.** But definitely heroin and Fentanyl could -- could be
15 sources of NAS?

16 **A.** Certainly could be.

17 **Q.** Let me ask you, Dr. Gupta, to turn to Exhibit 44227,
18 the document we were on just before lunch when I was having
19 trouble finding my way. Let me ask you to look at Page 6,
20 please. And under the executive summary in the first
21 paragraph, I wanted to point you to the next to the last
22 sentence. It says, "The most common risk factors reported
23 among cases of hepatitis B and C are drug misuse, both
24 injection use and non-injection use." Do you see that?

25 **A.** I see that.

1 Q. Is that a correct statement?

2 A. That's -- evidence points to that, yes, sir.

3 Q. So, that drug misuse is the most common factor or cause
4 of hepatitis B and C?

5 A. For new cases in West Virginia, yes, sir.

6 Q. And let me ask you to look at Page 12 of the document,
7 please, and I wanted to point you to the bottom of the page.
8 Do you have it there?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. The bottom of the page, there's a chart, and this is a
11 chart headed "Risk Factors Reported in Acute Confirmed
12 Hepatitis B Cases, 2012-16", correct?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. And the leading risk factor is injection drug use; is
15 that right?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And so, injection drug use would include use of heroin
18 and Fentanyl?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And it would include misuse of prescription opioids
21 that have been crushed and then injected; is that right?

22 A. It could be.

23 Q. And what other forms of injection drug use are there?

24 A. It could be -- the others probably close to it would be
25 some version of meth.

1 Q. Meth injected by --

2 A. Methamphetamine could also -- could also be injected.

3 MR. HESTER: Okay, thank you. Those are all the
4 questions I have, Dr. Gupta.

5 Your Honor, one housekeeping point. I did want to move
6 into evidence Defendant's Exhibit 3616, the West Virginia
7 Board of Medicine Quarterly Newsletter.

8 THE COURT: Is there any objection to that?

9 MR. FARRELL: No objection, Your Honor.

10 THE COURT: It's admitted.

11 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT 3616 ADMITTED**

12 MR. HESTER: Thank you.

13 Thank you, Your Honor.

14 MS. CALLAS: Good afternoon, Your Honor.

15 Good afternoon, Dr. Gupta. My name is Gretchen Callas.
16 I represent AmerisourceBergen.

17 I may wait one moment while I have a tech person come
18 in. His name is Richie. He should be here shortly.

19 THE WITNESS: Certainly.

20 MS. CALLAS: But I promise just to have a few
21 questions for you.

22 THE WITNESS: Sure.

23 (Pause)

24 MR. FARRELL: Your Honor, while we're filling dead
25 space, I'd like the record to reflect that Ms. Gretchen

1 Callas was my mentor on the Law Review at West Virginia
2 University in 1996, now that it's placed in the permanent
3 record.

4 MS. CALLAS: I have to move to strike, Your Honor,
5 all of that.

6 THE COURT: Farrell always finds a way to tell me
7 that he was on Law Review. I've got it.

8 (Laughter)

9 MS. CALLAS: At my expense, no less.
10 All right. Are we ready? I hope.

11 THE COURT: Technology, we're imprisoned by it,
12 aren't we?

13 MS. CALLAS: Yes, that's true.

14 **CROSS EXAMINATION**

15 **BY MS. CALLAS:**

16 **Q.** Okay. Dr. Gupta, we've spent a good bit of time over
17 the past two days talking about the Controlled Substances
18 Monitoring Program and I do want to ask you a few more
19 detailed questions about that, sir. You, in your role as
20 the Commissioner for the Bureau of Public Health, mentioned
21 that program in a number of reports; is that correct?

22 **A.** Yes.

23 **Q.** And you believed it was an important tool to use as we
24 dealt with overdose death rates; is that right?

25 **A.** Yes, as well as the overall volume of prescriptions out

1 there.

2 **Q.** There were a number of specific key recommendations you
3 had in some of your reports that related to the CSMP; is
4 that right?

5 **A.** That would be accurate.

6 **Q.** And in your role as the Commissioner for the Bureau of
7 Health, you gained some understanding of what West
8 Virginia's system could and could not do; is that right?

9 **A.** That would be correct.

10 **Q.** And you were familiar with the fact that each year,
11 beginning in about 2012, the Board of Pharmacy did publish
12 an Annual Report regarding the CSMP. Were you aware of that
13 report, sir?

14 **A.** I am aware generally that the reports are published.

15 **Q.** Okay. So, I'm going to have Defendant's Exhibit 2904.

16 MS. CALLAS: May I approach, Your Honor?

17 THE COURT: Yes.

18 MS. CALLAS: Thank you.

19 BY MS. CALLAS:

20 **Q.** So, Dr. Gupta, take a moment just to look that over.
21 I'll represent to you this is the 2014 Annual Report of the
22 West Virginia Board of Pharmacy related to the West Virginia
23 Controlled Substances Monitoring Program. It would have
24 been published around the time you took office as the
25 Commissioner of the Bureau of Public Health; that is, it

1 looked back at the entire year of 2014. Is this the type of
2 document you may have used as you studied the issues in West
3 Virginia related to opioid use and abuse?

4 **A.** This would certainly be one of the several documents we
5 would consider looking at.

6 MS. CALLAS: Okay. I would move the admission of
7 Defendant's 2904.

8 THE COURT: Any objection?

9 MS. KEARSE: No objection.

10 THE COURT: It's admitted.

11 **DEFENSE EXHIBIT 2904 ADMITTED**

12 BY MS. CALLAS:

13 **Q.** Okay. Let's start, Dr. Gupta, by looking at the very
14 first sentence of the Executive Summary. This report is
15 actually required by West Virginia statute 60A-9-5(j). Do
16 you see that?

17 **A.** Yes.

18 **Q.** Okay. If you proceed down through that paragraph,
19 you'll see that this report will recommend legislation to
20 enhance the CSMP in an attempt to reduce the quantity of
21 pharmaceutical controlled substances obtained by individuals
22 attempting to engage in fraud and deceit. Do you see that
23 language, sir?

24 **A.** I read that.

25 **Q.** And do you understand that was one of the objectives of

1 the CSMP system, to reduce fraud and deceit?

2 **A.** Sitting here, I couldn't tell you exact objectives of
3 the establishment of CSMP. I do read this and I believe
4 this was a genuine effort on this part for this purpose.

5 **Q.** Okay. At the bottom of this first page, you'll see a
6 description of the history of the CSMP. Do you see that,
7 sir?

8 **A.** I see it.

9 **Q.** The West Virginia Controlled Substances Monitoring Act
10 was implemented in 1995 to track only Schedule II controlled
11 substances. Do you see that?

12 **A.** Yes.

13 **Q.** Okay. Further in the paragraph, it indicates that the
14 CSMP was modified in 2002 by a legislative act that
15 encouraged -- an initiative to encourage safer prescribing
16 of all controlled substances in Schedules II, III and IV, to
17 reduce their abuse and limit the diversion of those
18 substances within the state; is that right?

19 **A.** That's correct.

20 **Q.** So, we expanded our CSMP in 2002 to include both
21 Schedule II, III and IV substances, right?

22 **A.** That would be accurate.

23 **Q.** Okay. The next page, at the top, the last sentence of
24 the first paragraph indicates that in December of 2004, the
25 Board of Pharmacy implemented further changes to the CSMP to

1 eliminate the third party data collection and to permit both
2 direct reporting and direct access via an internet-based
3 program. Do you see that?

4 **A.** I see. I read that.

5 **Q.** And am I correct, sir, that when we talk about
6 reporting, we're talking about dispensers of controlled
7 substances, such as pharmacies? They would report to the
8 CSMP; is that right?

9 **A.** I could speak to my knowledge from 2015 to 2018 and
10 ongoing as a licensee for the State of West Virginia for
11 medicine. If I was to prescribe a controlled substance,
12 Schedule II to IV, I would have to obviously register with
13 CSMP and then obviously utilize that to look at.

14 **Q.** Okay. But do you understand as your role as
15 Commissioner for the Bureau of Health that pharmacists had
16 an obligation to report what they were dispensing to the
17 CSMP? And I can rephrase that question, if you would like.

18 **A.** As the Commissioner, I did not have oversight of either
19 the CSMP, or Board of Pharmacy, or the pharmacies. So, a
20 it's little difficult for me to really talk to the fact
21 matters of other organizations. I can speak to what was a
22 role of the Board of Pharmacy and CSMP with the Bureau of
23 Public Health, but it's hard for me to talk about what the
24 role of Board of Pharmacy's regulations of pharmacies was.

25 **Q.** Okay. But as a physician, you do understand that by

1 2004, physicians in West Virginia had direct access via an
2 internet-based program if they wanted to check or register
3 with the CSMP?

4 **A.** Once again, not having come to the state before 2009, I
5 can definitely read the document and say it, but I did not
6 have fact or knowledge of that.

7 **Q.** Okay. Let's look down the page a little further.
8 Under the heading "West Virginia's Controlled Substance
9 Monitoring Program Description and Reporting", it indicates
10 that this is a central repository maintained by the West
11 Virginia Board of Pharmacy for collected data related to the
12 prescription and dispensing of all Schedule II, III and IV
13 controlled substances. Is that your understanding, sir?

14 **A.** That -- that is.

15 **Q.** And you'll see there's a list, a bullet point list,
16 right below that paragraph that begins with "name of
17 prescribing practitioner". Do you see that list, sir?

18 **A.** I see the list.

19 **Q.** Okay. And this is information that is collected and
20 housed in this West Virginia CSMP; is that your
21 understanding?

22 **A.** That's my understanding.

23 **Q.** Okay. So that a prescriber who accesses the system
24 should be able to see his or her name as the prescribing
25 practitioner, their address, DEA number. There is available

1 in this database the date the prescription was filled or
2 dispensed. There is in this database the number of refills
3 authorized by the prescription, the source of payment, the
4 patient's name, address and date of birth, the name,
5 national drug control number, quantity and strength of the
6 controlled substance dispensed. Do you see that?

7 **A.** I do see that.

8 **Q.** That's quite a bit of helpful information; would you
9 agree?

10 **A.** That would be helpful.

11 **Q.** And all of this information had been collected in West
12 Virginia from pharmacists and was available to physicians
13 for a long time; would you agree?

14 **A.** I could not testify in my position as either the
15 Commissioner or the State Health Officer as to the facts of
16 that matter.

17 **Q.** If you'll go down one more paragraph as required by
18 West Virginia Code 60A-9-5, you'll see there, sir, a list of
19 those who have access to all of this information. Do you
20 see that description?

21 **A.** I'm trying to read through it. Which paragraph? Which
22 sentence is that?

23 **Q.** It starts with, "As required by West Virginia Code,
24 information contained in this central repository is
25 confidential." Do you understand that to be true?

1 **A.** Yes.

2 **Q.** Okay. And that's because it's -- it is protected
3 healthcare information, is it not?

4 **A.** Correct.

5 **Q.** Patient's name, date of birth, their doctor and their
6 medications; is that right?

7 **A.** Right.

8 **Q.** Okay. So, this is not public information housed in the
9 CSMP and it indicates in this paragraph the information is
10 open to inspections only by, and then there's a list
11 specifically, inspectors and agents of the Board of
12 Pharmacy, correct?

13 **A.** That's correct. And if you would like me to, I can
14 help the Court understand really what it meant, just
15 information I can share. I'm happy to.

16 **Q.** Yes. If you have information about who can access this
17 CSMP, I would be interested to hear that.

18 **A.** Yes. So, these individuals, my understanding is, could
19 access on a case-by-base basis, but what they could not do
20 is what we call fishing. They could not go out and start
21 looking for cases random.

22 **Q.** And that is actually something that was changed
23 slightly in 2012, was it not, with the enactment of the
24 Senate Bill 437?

25 **A.** We could go back and look at that, but my understanding

1 when I came into the office in 2015, you still could not do
2 fishing.

3 **Q.** Okay. Well, let's look. So, we'll leave this document
4 for a moment or two and let's go to Defendant's
5 Exhibit 3105, which is the Senate Bill 437.

6 **THE COURT:** Would the DEA have access to that
7 information?

8 **MS. CALLAS:** I think they are likely to be
9 identified in that paragraph, Your Honor, as specific law
10 enforcement members.

11 **BY MS. CALLAS:**

12 **Q.** Okay, Dr. Gupta, let's look at -- it is identified in
13 the lower left corner as a 16 in Defendant's 3105.

14 Actually, let's go to 18. So, toward the back of that
15 exhibit, lower left side, you'll see 3105.00018.

16 **A.** I see it.

17 **Q.** And I'll direct you to the middle of the page.

18 **MS. CALLAS:** I don't know. Do we have this
19 document? Okay, thank you.

20 **BY MS. CALLAS:**

21 **Q.** You'll see a 3. "The Board shall establish an Advisory
22 Committee to develop, implement and recommend parameters to
23 be used in identifying abnormal and unusual usage patterns
24 of patients in this state." Do you see that language?

25 **A.** I see it.

1 **Q.** Okay. So, this is the creation in this bill of an
2 Advisory Committee and if we go down to B toward the bottom
3 of that same page, it also states that, "The Board of
4 Pharmacy shall create a West Virginia Controlled Substances
5 Monitoring Program Database Review Committee of
6 individuals", and then they're described there. Do you see
7 that?

8 **A.** One second. Yes, I see it.

9 **Q.** Okay. Is it your understanding, Dr. Gupta, that this
10 was a newly created committee that could do, in some ways,
11 what you just described as using the data in the Controlled
12 Substances Monitoring Program?

13 **A.** So, if I can expand.

14 **Q.** Yes, please.

15 **A.** The fishing piece was still not allowed, meaning if you
16 had Jane Doe taking prescriptions, you cannot go and follow
17 up with Jane Doe because this was a very sensitive matter
18 that could be of use for many other purposes. So, what you
19 could do with this new created Advisory Committee is perhaps
20 look at who are the top physicians who may be having more
21 associated overdose deaths or things like that. So, there
22 was some purpose, but it was not an end-all be-all.

23 **Q.** Would you agree, Dr. Gupta, that until this law was
24 enacted in West Virginia in July of 2012, we could not use
25 the data sitting in the CSMP to identify the top ten

1 prescribers in West Virginia?

2 **A.** That would be accurate.

3 **Q.** Okay. We could not use this data to identify patients
4 who were seeing multiple doctors or visiting multiple
5 pharmacies with multiple prescriptions?

6 **A.** You technically could by -- and so, if I was a
7 physician prior to this legislation and if I went in and I
8 saw my patient had gone to other places, then I technically
9 could see that, but what you -- one cannot do before and
10 cannot do after this legislation is target individuals
11 through this fishing piece. So, that could not be done.

12 **Q.** I am going to suggest we go back and look at the 2014
13 Annual Report one more time because it does discuss the
14 Committee. So, if we go to the last -- or the next page.
15 One more page.

16 So, we'll see right in the middle of that page a
17 paragraph that begins, "As created by Senate Bill 437",
18 which we were just looking at, "the Controlled Substances
19 Monitoring Program Advisory Committee and the Controlled
20 Substances Monitoring Program Database Review Committee have
21 been actively trying to address substance abuse issues in
22 the state through use of the CSMP"; is that correct?

23 **A.** That's accurate.

24 **Q.** And you understood in your role as the Commissioner
25 they were attempting to use the CSMP for that purpose?

1 **A.** I understood and we partnered with them.

2 **Q.** If we go down one paragraph, "The Database Review
3 Committee evaluates those who have been identified as
4 outliers to decide appropriate action. Individuals that
5 have been classified as patients, prescribers or dispensers
6 that warrant additional scrutiny are being pursued in a
7 number of ways." So, that's what you and I were just
8 discussing; is that right?

9 **A.** Correct.

10 **Q.** And so, this was ongoing in 2014 but, as you've
11 testified, none of this could happen prior to 2012; is that
12 right?

13 **A.** That would be accurate.

14 **Q.** Okay. The next sentence, "Thousands of letters have
15 been sent to practitioners concerning patients visiting
16 large numbers of prescribers and getting prescriptions." Do
17 you see that?

18 **A.** Yes.

19 **Q.** So, were you aware that the Board of Pharmacy was
20 sending out thousands of letters to West Virginia doctors
21 about their patients?

22 **A.** We certainly had discussed that with Board of Pharmacy
23 so, yes.

24 **Q.** And one of the reasons that the Board of Pharmacy had
25 to send out thousands of letters to doctors was because the

1 doctors were not accessing the information available to them
2 on the CSMP; is that right?

3 **A.** Can I explain that?

4 **Q.** Sure.

5 **A.** So, doctors practice culture behavior is not easy to
6 change and we have to deploy all the tools that are -- in
7 our ability to do that. And the thought behind this was to,
8 once again, look at the high prescribers and then begin to
9 nudge those prescribers and remind them of their both
10 obligation to their patients, as well as obligation to law.

11 **Q.** Now, my understanding of these letters was also to let
12 a doctor know when they had a patient who was seeing not
13 only this doctor, but perhaps up to ten, or more than ten
14 other doctors for controlled substance prescriptions; is
15 that right?

16 **A.** I don't recall the contents of the letter but,
17 certainly, as we found in our social autopsy, if you were
18 seeing more practitioners, more pharmacies, you were so many
19 more times likely to die. So, this is very consistent with
20 that, to tell doctors that you have maybe patients -- that
21 you have a high volume of patients. I don't exactly
22 remember if it was also -- because that would be divulging
23 other information to patients, so I don't exactly remember
24 that.

25 **Q.** Let's talk a little bit about the usage by West

1 Virginia doctors of this system. It was an on-line system
2 beginning in 2004. I'm going to ask you, Doctor, to look
3 for Exhibit 3036, which was introduced earlier today. It's
4 the West Virginia Expert Pain Management Panel Guidelines.
5 Do you see that?

6 **A.** Yes.

7 **Q.** On Page 9 of that, those guidelines, you'll see a
8 reference to the Controlled Substances Monitoring Programs
9 and the description of those programs. "The Prescription
10 Drug Monitoring Programs, PDMPs, also known as Controlled
11 Substance Monitoring Programs, CSMPs, must be fully utilized
12 to reach their potential in controlling prescription drug
13 abuse and diversion." Do you agree with that statement?

14 **A.** Yes.

15 **Q.** "However, in the majority of the 49 states with
16 operational PDMPs, participation by prescribers and
17 dispensers is voluntary with utilization rates well below
18 50%." Is that right?

19 **A.** It's written there. It must be accurate.

20 **Q.** Okay. Do you know what percentage of West Virginia
21 physicians are registered to use our Controlled Substance
22 Monitoring Program?

23 **A.** I could not tell you right now.

24 **Q.** Before we leave this document, Dr. Gupta, I would like
25 you to turn back to Page 4 and I would just like to ask you

1 somewhat randomly about Dr. Ahmet Ozturk. Do you see his
2 name below your name on the panel member list?

3 **A.** I do see it.

4 **Q.** Do you know Dr. Ozturk?

5 **A.** I do not.

6 **Q.** Okay, but he is a -- it suggests a physician at
7 Marshall University who was a participant on this expert
8 panel?

9 **A.** I see his name.

10 **Q.** Okay. So, let's go back to physicians and physician
11 usage of the CSMP. It's correct, if I am a physician and I
12 am writing a prescription for a controlled substance, I
13 could utilize this West Virginia database to see if my
14 patient is receiving this same prescription from anyone
15 else; is that right?

16 **A.** That's right and that's the best practice.

17 **Q.** Okay. Now, doctors in West Virginia needed to be
18 encouraged to register for the CSMP; is that right?

19 **A.** Correct.

20 **Q.** In fact, they had to be forced to do so in 2016 by law?

21 **A.** There was legislation requiring that, yes.

22 **Q.** And we talked about that a little bit earlier. It's
23 Exhibit 3015. And I am going to ask you to look at a
24 particular page in that exhibit. It's the very last page.
25 So, I think you were asked earlier about whether doctors

1 were required in West Virginia to register and we concluded
2 after reviewing this document that they were not required to
3 until 2016; is that right?

4 **A.** I believe so.

5 **Q.** Okay. In fact, practitioner -- "Any practitioner who
6 fails to register with the West Virginia Controlled
7 Substance Monitoring Program and obtain and maintain online
8 or other electronic access", this is paragraph F., "to the
9 program will be fined \$1,000.00." Do you see that?

10 **A.** I see that.

11 **Q.** So, there was actually a penalty attached to failure to
12 register and maintain your online access?

13 **A.** Yes. That made me register.

14 **Q.** Okay. I have one other Board of Pharmacy Annual
15 Report, the Controlled Substances Monitoring Program 2016
16 Annual Report. So, we're going to jump ahead two years and
17 we'll look at that.

18 MS. CALLAS: May I approach?

19 THE COURT: Yes.

20 MS. CALLAS: Thank you.

21 BY MS. CALLAS:

22 **Q.** So, Dr. Gupta, it's now two years after the last report
23 we looked at. This is the 2016 Annual Report of the
24 Controlled Substances Monitoring Program and, particularly,
25 I'd like to direct your attention to Page 4 of this

1 document, which is entitled "CSMP Dispensing Statistics".

2 **A.** Yes.

3 **Q.** It does indicate in the very first sentence that,
4 "Overall dosage unit dispensing numbers have declined over
5 the last several years", and that would be specific to
6 controlled substances, correct?

7 **A.** Correct.

8 **Q.** And not -- not other medications.

9 I'm actually on the wrong page. I apologize. I was
10 getting onto a different topic. It's the page before.
11 That's what I wanted to look at.

12 So, Page 3. Sorry about that.

13 This page has a chart and a bar graph and the first --
14 the chart actually indicates active users of the CSMP for
15 2014. Do you see that?

16 **A.** I see the table.

17 **Q.** Okay. And I think what I would like you to notice is
18 if we look at the number of prescribers who are indicated to
19 be active users of our Controlled Substances Monitoring
20 Program in 2014, we had 2,537?

21 **A.** Yes.

22 **Q.** And, by 2016, we had almost tripled that number, not
23 quite; certainly doubled that number to 6,618; is that
24 right?

25 **A.** Yes.

1 **Q.** So, we had 4,000 more physicians or prescribers using
2 the CSMP over a two-year period?

3 **A.** Correct.

4 **Q.** Okay. At the bottom of the page we have the number of
5 user queries, so those are usage basically of the system;
6 would you agree?

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** And we can see over time going back to 2008 how many
9 more queries we have by prescribers of our system.

10 **A.** Yes.

11 **Q.** Okay. And you would agree this is all a positive
12 improvement?

13 **A.** Certainly.

14 **Q.** Okay. But the fact of the matter is that even in 2008
15 when we had, oh, what, 300,000 queries, as opposed to nearly
16 a million, in 2008, this system was still in place and was
17 available for physicians to be using; is that right?

18 **A.** As I testified prior, it was available in a voluntary
19 capacity.

20 **Q.** Now, there's no reason to believe there's anybody but
21 physicians that could access this in a regular user
22 capacity; is that right?

23 **A.** Can I expand on that, please?

24 **Q.** Of course.

25 **A.** So, there is some ability for Advanced Practice

1 Registered Nurses to prescribe, as well. So -- and for even
2 physicians, it's usually the staff that does it. And so, in
3 the answer can anybody else, it's usually the staff was
4 doing the query, but there's nothing beyond their office or
5 any prescriber for that who is licensed to prescribe.

6 **Q.** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Gupta.

7 Okay. Let's switch gears and then we'll wrap up. The
8 Board of Medicine, you've testified that you served as the
9 Secretary of the Board of Medicine for approximately four
10 years; does that sound right?

11 **A.** Yes, Ms. Callas.

12 **Q.** And the Board of Medicine for those doctors that are
13 MDs in the State of West Virginia is both a regulatory body,
14 the licensing body, and they also conduct investigations; is
15 that your understanding?

16 **A.** Yes. And educational body, as well, I think we can
17 agree on.

18 **Q.** Okay. The Board of Medicine decides and can
19 investigate whether a physician has engaged in the improper
20 practices of medicine; is that right?

21 **A.** If they are violating the -- what we have called the
22 West Virginia Medical Practice Act, then there could be
23 complaint lodged. There's a formal procedure and a Board
24 does not itself make that decision and go and pick doctors.
25 There has to be a formal complaint launched according to

1 clearly the statute. And then, that complaint could be
2 investigated through the Board of Medicine's investigators.
3 And there is a Complaint Committee to which the complaint
4 goes through. So, it is an entire process that has -- that
5 has elements to it.

6 **Q.** Okay. Well, let's break that down a little bit. That
7 was helpful. So, if -- if there is no complaint, the Board
8 of Medicine does not just initiate an investigation of a
9 doctor on its own; is that right?

10 **A.** That's correct.

11 **Q.** And if the Board of Medicine were to receive
12 information from, let's say, this CSMP Review Committee,
13 then here are your top five prescribers, that is not a basis
14 to initiate an investigation, is it?

15 **A.** That's correct.

16 **Q.** Okay. So, we need a complaint about a prescriber to
17 initiate an investigation of that doctor's prescribing
18 practices?

19 **A.** A formal complaint has to be filed in accordance with
20 the law regulating the Board of Medicine.

21 **Q.** And, as the Secretary of the Board of Medicine, you
22 were at times involved in that investigation process to the
23 extent there might be a consent order that was issued?

24 **A.** So, I can talk about my role. I was not a member of
25 the Complaint Committee, but I was the Secretary of Board.

1 I definitely -- the orders, consent orders, were signed by
2 myself, the Board President, and there were rare occasions
3 in which the President, the Vice President would be
4 conflicted in making that decision in which I would chair
5 the Committee to make the decision on that particular
6 physician specifically.

7 THE COURT: Where did the complaints come from
8 typically?

9 THE WITNESS: Your Honor, they could come from
10 individuals like patients. They can come from a pharmacy.
11 They could come from -- the State Health Commissioner can
12 file a complaint if a physician -- so, and all of those
13 things have happened, but anybody, any member of the public,
14 can file a complaint.

15 BY MS. CALLAS:

16 Q. Now --

17 THE COURT: Okay. So, if I knew there was a
18 pharmacy downtown and I -- that was writing these
19 prescriptions and basically running a pain clinic, I could
20 file a complaint and it would be investigated?

21 THE WITNESS: Yes, Your Honor. If anyone would
22 file -- it's an on-line system, as well, anonymous. It's
23 held anonymous by law and anyone can file a complaint if
24 they know anything about any wrongdoings of any physician
25 licensed under the Board and they would initiate the

1 complaint and investigate it.

2 BY MS. CALLAS:

3 **Q.** Now, those complaints are confidential; is that right?

4 **A.** Anonymous and confidential.

5 **Q.** Okay. So, I cannot, as a member of the public, do a
6 search for a doctor to see if he is subject to a complaint?

7 **A.** So, I've just explained that. So, a complaint is
8 filed. The first thing that happens, anonymously, the
9 complaint goes to the Complaint Committee. Oftentimes, it
10 can be adjudicated without further investigation, depending
11 on the merits of the case.

12 Other cases, it is investigated. Should a cause be
13 found to take it to the Discipline Committee and make a
14 discipline, only when the found discipline is voted upon by
15 the Board does it go public and goes in the permanent record
16 of the physician and is public, publically available.

17 **Q.** So, the complaint and the investigation process; that
18 is prior to a decision, is all confidential or shielded from
19 public view; is that right?

20 **A.** Until the final decision is made. At that point, all
21 of that becomes public, a matter of public.

22 **Q.** I'm going to ask to use an example. There is a doctor
23 by the name of Deleno Webb. Does that name ring a bell to
24 you?

25 **A.** It does not.

1 Q. Okay. I have a document that might refresh your
2 recollection. Your signature is on it.

3 MS. CALLAS: So, I would ask to approach the
4 witness with that document.

5 Would you like to see this, Your Honor? I don't --
6 it's not an exhibit. It's just to refresh his recollection.

7 THE COURT: Do you remember now, Dr. Gupta?

8 THE WITNESS: Your Honor, West Virginia is only
9 one of a very rare few states in the country where the
10 President of the Board and the Secretary have to physically,
11 by ink, sign every license in the State of West Virginia.
12 So, I signed way more of these type things than I can
13 remember. I do, I'm trying to recollect.

14 THE COURT: Do you remember at all?

15 THE WITNESS: I remember -- I remember the case.
16 I'd have to go through the whole thing to remember it, but I
17 do remember the case.

18 THE COURT: Well, when you've refreshed him. You
19 need to take the document.

20 MS. CALLAS: I -- you're right. You're right.

21 Let me take that back.

22 I wasn't sure if you were going to let me get away with
23 that.

24 BY MS. CALLAS:

25 Q. Okay. Dr. Gupta, do you recall that the West Virginia

1 Board of Medicine received a complaint about Dr. Deleno Webb
2 in or about the June of 2014 time frame?

3 **A.** I do not recall.

4 **Q.** Okay. Do you recall that Dr. Deleno Webb had a
5 complaint at some point in time related to the prescribing
6 of controlled substances?

7 **A.** Consequent to what I just viewed, I -- I -- there seems
8 to be -- obviously there, but I do not recall that.

9 **Q.** Do you recall that there was an investigation that the
10 Board of Medicine did engage in over a period of time
11 related to this doctor?

12 **A.** I do not recall beyond what I just saw.

13 **Q.** Okay. Do you recall that there was some action taken
14 by the Board after that investigation?

15 **A.** Once again, beyond what I just reviewed, I do not
16 recall.

17 **Q.** So, it sounds like you don't really recall the
18 specifics of this doctor's case, or do you?

19 **A.** I do not.

20 **Q.** Okay. Okay. Well, I appreciate you making the
21 attempt, nonetheless. I think we have established though,
22 assuming there was an investigation of this particular
23 doctor, or any other doctor related to allegations of
24 improper prescribing, the complaint and the investigation
25 would be kept confidential and there would be no notice

1 provided to pharmacists, pharmacies or patients that this
2 was an ongoing investigation; is that right?

3 **A.** I think that's correct. An ongoing investigation of
4 the Board of Medicine in West Virginia is not subject to
5 publicity, and media reports, and reports to other people.

6 **Q.** And while this doctor, or any other doctor is subject
7 to an investigation for improper prescribing, they can
8 continue to prescribe; is that right?

9 **A.** I can explain.

10 **Q.** Okay.

11 **A.** So, there are remedies in the law that they -- that's a
12 decision of the Board. There are remedies that include
13 seeking an immediate injunction that can make us if that's
14 where the determination is. And in other circumstances, the
15 -- if it's not an immediate recognized threat to the public,
16 then they can continue to do their work until such a time a
17 finding is found.

18 MS. CALLAS: Thank you, Dr. Gupta. That's all the
19 questions I have.

20 THE COURT: Is there any redirect, Ms. Kearse?

21 MS. KEARSE: Briefly, Your Honor. I think Mr.
22 Farrell may have a couple after me.

23 **REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

24 **BY MS. KEARSE:**

25 **Q.** Good afternoon, Mr. Gupta. I just have a couple of

1 things I want to follow up on. You were shown again the
2 West Virginia Drug Overdose Deaths and Historical Overview,
3 41213, and I just want to go to Page 5.

4 MS. KEARSE: Is this working, Gina? I can use the
5 ELMO.

6 BY MS. KEARSE:

7 Q. And you were shown on the top of Page 5 --

8 MS. KEARSE: Go to Figure 3 first.

9 BY MS. KEARSE:

10 Q. Do you recall that?

11 A. I do.

12 Q. Okay. And you were being asked about other drugs.

13 MS. KEARSE: I want to go down to the bottom of
14 that paragraph, Gina.

15 BY MS. KEARSE:

16 Q. The number -- if you can read this on that same page
17 that you were being asked about drug overdoses and the drugs
18 used?

19 A. The last sentence -- last sentence of the first
20 paragraph here, it says, "The number one cause of drug
21 overdose deaths was associated opiates, making West Virginia
22 number one in the nation."

23 Q. And that was in relation to the report that you did; is
24 that right?

25 A. That was a -- that was part of the report.

1 **Q.** And I want to go quickly to the 2016 document,
2 Exhibit 03036. This was the West Virginia Expert Pain
3 Management Panel. You just actually reviewed it.

4 MS. KEARSE: And, Gina, if we could put the cover
5 page on that.

6 BY MS. KEARSE:

7 **Q.** So you know which one, do you have that in front of
8 you? Okay. And this is the one that had you listed there.
9 I want to go to the first page on that document, Page 3,
10 actually. In the middle of Paragraph 2, can you read that
11 to the Court, Dr. Gupta? "Approximately", do you see that
12 section?

13 **A.** I see it now. "Approximately 2 million Americans live
14 with prescription opioid abuse or dependence. That's per
15 SAMHSA, 2013.

16 **Q.** And the next sentence?

17 **A.** "About 75 percent of opioid addiction patients" -- I'm
18 sorry. "About 75 percent of opioid addiction disease
19 patients switch to heroin as a cheaper opioid source."
20 That's SAMHSA, 2013.

21 **Q.** And that was part of the Executive Summary of that
22 Panel Report?

23 **A.** Yes.

24 MS. KEARSE: Thank you, Doctor. No more
25 questions. I was quick today. Mr. Farrell may have a

1 couple.

2 MR. FARRELL: With permission?

3 THE COURT: Yes. Go ahead. I assume there's no
4 objection to the double teaming here?

5 MR. FARRELL: I would like to refer to it as
6 double dipping, Your Honor. They get to triple dip, we only
7 get to double dip.

8 THE COURT: Okay.

9 MR. FARRELL: I promise I'll make it entertaining,
10 if not brief.

11 **REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

12 **BY MR. FARRELL:**

13 **Q.** The first thing I'd like to do is with reference to the
14 demonstrative on Dr. Deleno Webb, despite the fact that you
15 don't recall this particular one, your name is on this
16 document, is it not?

17 **A.** It is.

18 **Q.** And it's in your official capacity as the Secretary to
19 the West Virginia Board of Medicine?

20 **A.** It is.

21 **Q.** And when you reviewed this document, what is the action
22 taking place? I'm sorry. I think the copy was taken away
23 from him.

24 THE COURT: Well, she used it to refresh his
25 recollection and that's the right way to do it.

1 MS. CALLAS: Yes, and I'll object to the extent
2 you're using something that's not really an exhibit. It was
3 used to refresh his recollection. It did not work.

4 BY MR. FARRELL:

5 Q. The document that was attempted to be used to refresh
6 your recollection, I would like to show you as a potential
7 exhibit to identify it.

8 MR. FARRELL: May I approach, Your Honor?

9 MS. CALLAS: Well, let me object because it's not
10 an exhibit. It is not identified by either party in this
11 case as an exhibit for its use at trial.

12 THE COURT: Mr. Hester, did you want to say
13 something?

14 MR. HESTER: I'm with Ms. Callas. I agree, Your
15 Honor, it wasn't -- it didn't refresh the witness's
16 recollection.

17 THE COURT: Yes. I'm not going to let you do
18 this, Mr. Farrell. Where are you going with this?

19 MR. FARRELL: Well, this is a consent decree
20 surrendering a medical license from a doctor who was
21 prescribing in Huntington, Cabell County, West Virginia at
22 pharmacies that the distributor supplied. So, I'd like to
23 begin creating a record with a surrendered license that
24 you'll see his name throughout their documents in Weeks 3
25 and 4.

1 THE COURT: Well, I'm not going to let you do it
2 now. You can do it later if you can get it in.

3 MR. FARRELL: The only problem, Judge, is that I
4 don't know if there's anybody else whose signature is on
5 here that I can get other than Dr. Gupta.

6 THE COURT: Well --

7 MR. FARRELL: If he can authenticate it, then it's
8 a simple --

9 THE COURT: And the purpose of it is to show that
10 this was a doctor who was prescribing opioids in Cabell
11 County, or Huntington, or wherever?

12 MR. FARRELL: Yes, Your Honor, to such extent that
13 he lost his -- he surrendered his license to Dr. Gupta.

14 THE COURT: Okay. And what does it show? What's
15 --

16 MR. FARRELL: What we intend to show --

17 THE COURT: I mean what is the ultimate purpose of
18 this?

19 MR. FARRELL: The ultimate purpose of this is that
20 the volume of pills that were coming into Cabell County were
21 responsible to, in part, the bad doctors that McKesson spent
22 most of this morning discussing. I've got one here.

23 THE COURT: Well, I'm going to let you do it.
24 I'll allow it. Go ahead.

25 MR. FARRELL: May I approach?

1 THE COURT: The objection is overruled.

2 MS. CALLAS: Your Honor --

3 THE COURT: Do you want to put anything on the
4 record, Ms. Callas?

5 MS. CALLAS: Well, my only comment, Your Honor, is
6 that if I had been permitted and, of course, I did not seek
7 to introduce the document because it was not on an exhibit
8 list of either party, or any of the parties, I would have
9 asked more questions about it. So, perhaps if Mr. Farrell
10 is going to go into much detail, if I have any additional
11 questions, one or two at the end, I would request the right
12 to recross.

13 THE COURT: Well, go ahead. He can authenticate
14 it, if he can, and I'll conditionally admit it and then make
15 up my mind whether I'm going to really consider it or not.

16 MR. FARRELL: Okay. And to be fair, I will yield
17 the floor to Ms. Callas, if she would like to --

18 THE COURT: Just do it.

19 BY MR. FARRELL:

20 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, what is this document?

21 **A.** This is a consent order by the West Virginia Board of
22 Medicine.

23 **Q.** And is your signature on the document?

24 **A.** Yes.

25 **Q.** In what capacity?

1 **A.** In the capacity of the Secretary of the Board of
2 Medicine.

3 **Q.** And what does your signature indicate by affixing it to
4 this document?

5 **A.** It indicates an official order in my capacity
6 representing the West Virginia Board of Medicine.

7 **Q.** So, is this a formal action taken by the West Virginia
8 Board of Medicine?

9 **A.** Yes.

10 **Q.** And is this your signature endorsing or validating this
11 action?

12 **A.** Yes.

13 **Q.** And is this a document that is created in the usual
14 course of the licensing of physicians in the State of West
15 Virginia through the West Virginia Board of Medicine?

16 **A.** Created in the course of disciplining of licensing in
17 the State of West Virginia through the West Virginia Board
18 of Medicine.

19 MR. FARRELL: Judge, at this time, I would have
20 the document marked as an exhibit and entered into the
21 record.

22 THE COURT: Do you have an exhibit number for it?

23 MR. FARRELL: I did. Can we -- can I make one up?

24 MR. HESTER: Your Honor, simply to preserve the
25 record, we do note our objection to this. It wasn't on

1 either parties' exhibit list.

2 MR. FARRELL: We'll mark it at P-9999.

3 THE COURT: Okay.

4 MR. FARRELL: Thank you.

5 THE COURT: My deputy gets very upset with me if I
6 don't make you put numbers on the exhibits.

7 MR. FARRELL: Yes, Your Honor.

8 THE COURT: She's got to keep track of all this.

9 MR. FARRELL: Yes, Your Honor.

10 BY MR. FARRELL:

11 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, I think I have five categories of follow-up
12 from cross. The first is document P-44211, which was the
13 social autopsy.

14 **A.** I have it.

15 **Q.** And the questions that you were asked related to a
16 correlation between prescription opioids and illicit opioids
17 resulting in death. So, let me ask you initially this.
18 Through your research and in your role with the -- as the
19 State's health officer, have you been able to identify a
20 direct correlation -- let me get the words right. Have you
21 been able to identify a direct correlation between diverted
22 prescription pills and the transition to using street drugs,
23 such as heroin, Fentanyl or methamphetamine?

24 MS. MAINIGI: Objection, Your Honor. This is the
25 same discussion we had yesterday. Mr. Farrell is now just

1 trying to gateway -- back-door the gateway discussion.

2 THE COURT: Sustained.

3 MR. FARRELL: Judge, if I can beg your indulgence
4 for a moment, the reason I'm not trying to go in through the
5 back door, I'm trying to go in through the front door, this
6 was literally disclosed by the plaintiffs.

7 THE COURT: Well, you're trying to get an opinion
8 from him about the gateway point, aren't you?

9 MR. FARRELL: Yes, because we disclosed it. Yes,
10 that's exactly what I'm attempting to do since we disclosed
11 it. This isn't a sandbag or a last minute attack. This
12 literally was disclosed by us last year, October.

13 THE COURT: Ms. Mainigi, go ahead, please.

14 MS. MAINIGI: Yes. Your Honor, I'd rely primarily
15 on the argument I made to Your Honor yesterday, which is
16 that this is covered under -- Your Honor said he was going
17 to reserve ruling on this and I think, yesterday, we had
18 argument on it back and forth, including from Mr. Farrell.
19 This falls under *Downey v. Bob's Discount Furniture*.

20 COURT REPORTER: I'm sorry. Can you speak into
21 the mic? Is it on?

22 MS. MAINIGI: Oh, you know what? I'm so sorry.
23 It was not on. I apologize.

24 COURT REPORTER: It's okay.

25 MS. MAINIGI: This falls, Your Honor, into *Downey*

1 v. *Bob's Discount Furniture Holdings*, which is a case Your
2 Honor cited. Dr. Gupta was never -- Ms. Kearse with Dr.
3 Gupta was never able to lay a foundation for the gateway.
4 Dr. Gupta, in his capacity, would not be in a position to
5 have -- to be a percipient witness, personal knowledge and
6 observations, as opposed to facts supplied by others, which
7 is what he is operating under.

8 He was allowed to testify as to hybrid opinions if his
9 -- his hybrid opinions are limited to his involvement in the
10 events giving rise to this litigation. Dr. Gupta does not
11 have that information. He relied on studies, as he
12 testified at his deposition for the gateway theory.

13 MR. HESTER: Your Honor -- I'm sorry, Your Honor.

14 THE COURT: All right. That's all right. You go
15 ahead.

16 MR. HESTER: Sorry, Your Honor. I didn't mean to
17 interrupt.

18 THE COURT: That's all right.

19 MR. HESTER: I was going to add, as well, I
20 believe this is beyond the scope of our cross.

21 MS. MAINIGI: That is -- that's correct.

22 THE COURT: Well, I think that's right. I'm going
23 to let you mark it, and we'll put it in the record, and you
24 can ask -- you've already had him identify it, but I'm not
25 going to let you go down the path of questioning him about

1 the gateway theory because -- for the reasons counsel have
2 so articulately placed on the record. So, that's where you
3 are, Mr. Farrell.

4 MR. FARRELL: I understand, Judge, and I also
5 understand that you don't care for people arguing with your
6 rulings. And so, the plaintiffs believe we've made
7 appropriate disclosures and disagree with the positions
8 taken by the defendants and I'll move on.

9 THE COURT: Well, you can argue with me to the
10 extent of placing your objections on the record and the
11 reasons for them, period.

12 MR. FARRELL: Yes.

13 THE COURT: And you've done that and I thank you.

14 MR. FARRELL: Thank you, Judge.

15 THE COURT: Okay.

16 BY MR. FARRELL:

17 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, you just spent some time talking about the
18 CSMP as a tool that you use in your role in public health.
19 In general, aside from the CSMP, where else would a person
20 in public health be able to find data regarding physician
21 prescribing patterns?

22 **A.** There are several other sources that folks in my
23 position --

24 **Q.** So, let's start with direct sources. Where is the most
25 district source to get information on where doctors'

1 prescriptions are being filled?

2 **A.** The -- if you're asking the sources available to me as
3 Commissioner, State Health Officer, those direct sources
4 could be -- there are CDC sources that provide us that, but
5 there's also -- we used to use Quintiles IMS data. That is
6 something that I think one of the counsel today, this
7 morning, showed a graph at 20.8 prescriptions. That's where
8 that comes from.

9 **Q.** That's a good point. I think that's Exhibit --
10 DEF-WV-747. Can we pull it up, please? So, one of the
11 exhibits that you were asked about was the number of
12 prescriptions per person and I wanted to follow up with
13 that, as well.

14 MR. FARRELL: I think it is Page 38. There it is.

15 No. Can you go to Page 38 first? The next page.

16 Yeah. Back up one. There we go.

17 BY MR. FARRELL:

18 **Q.** So, can you in more detail describe what does this
19 factor mean, "RX per capita"? Can you explain for the Court
20 what that means?

21 **A.** This means the total number of prescriptions for all
22 prescription-level medications in -- by state per person,
23 man, woman, baby, child, by State for the year of 2016.

24 **Q.** And is this the type of data that you would rely upon
25 in the field of public health when exercising your duties?

1 **A.** Yes. Clearly, I would be presenting on it, so yes.

2 **Q.** And not just in public health, but does the CDC rely
3 upon this data when attempting to reach positions on
4 physician prescribing trends or patterns.

5 MS. MAINIGI: Objection, foundation, Your Honor.
6 This witness is not in a position to know what the CDC is
7 relying on.

8 THE COURT: Sustained.

9 BY MR. FARRELL:

10 **Q.** You mentioned earlier --

11 MR. FARRELL: Okay, that's fair.

12 I would like to have blown up the bottom right-hand
13 corner.

14 BY MR. FARRELL:

15 **Q.** In this exhibit that you published that the defendants
16 entered into evidence, did you rely upon Quintiles Xponent
17 2017 data when creating this document?

18 **A.** Yes.

19 **Q.** Go to the next slide, please. Again, this is another
20 data point from the document entered into evidence by the
21 defendants. Is this data point, does it rely upon Quintiles
22 IMS Xponent data?

23 MS. MAINIGI: Objection, outside the scope of the
24 direct -- of the cross examination.

25 THE COURT: Well, I'm going to sustain the

1 objection. This is getting pretty far --

2 MR. FARRELL: Well, then I'll get right to the
3 point.

4 THE COURT: Good.

5 BY MR. FARRELL:

6 **Q.** Is Quintiles IMS Xponent, is that now known as IQVIA?

7 **A.** Yes.

8 **Q.** And is IQVIA data part of the data that you rely upon
9 in the field of public health when identifying prescriber
10 trends of prescriptions, including opioids?

11 MS. MAINIGI: Objection, Your Honor, outside of
12 the scope of the cross examination.

13 THE COURT: Sustained.

14 BY MR. FARRELL:

15 **Q.** The data that's down here that says Quintiles IMS
16 Xponent, is this the type of data that you relied upon, and
17 specifically relied upon, when creating this --

18 THE COURT: That's the same question. Mr.
19 Farrell.

20 MR. FARRELL: Judge, I'm struggling to understand
21 how the defendants --

22 THE COURT: Well, I'm -- I'm sorry. I didn't mean
23 to interrupt you. Go ahead.

24 MR. FARRELL: I'm struggling to understand how the
25 defendants can spend the better part of today challenging

1 the data sources of this witness and then, when I point out
2 what the data sources are, their objections get sustained.
3 I apologize.

4 THE COURT: Well, I've made a ruling. Go ahead.
5 This is plowing ground that we've been over and over, I
6 believe.

7 MR. FARRELL: Well, now -- and I believe you
8 offered me the opportunity to lay the foundation through
9 other means.

10 THE COURT: Well, I did, but I -- I'm not sure
11 this is the proper way to do it at this point in the trial.

12 BY MR. FARRELL:

13 **Q.** Now, there are a number of questions that were asked of
14 you during direct regarding why opioids are at a higher
15 prescription rate in West Virginia than other states. In
16 your role as a public health officer, have you seen any
17 indication that obesity, say, is a driving factor in higher
18 opioid rates?

19 **A.** Can I explain that further?

20 **Q.** Sure.

21 **A.** Shortly. So, I had mentioned this morning it's not
22 just obesity. It's the consequences of obesity. It's what
23 happens because of that. It's how much disability you have
24 from obesity. It's how much arthritis you get from obesity.

25 So, if you start to look at the data from arthritis,

1 for example, from, you know, 2003 to 2017, you will see
2 there's two points increase in arthritis.

3 If you similarly look -- start to look at the data of
4 mortality from obesity, thinking if you're about to die,
5 you're going to have need for pain because of neuropathy and
6 other complications of diabetes.

7 You see that a mortality rate from obesity, Your Honor,
8 went down over the years. They didn't go up. Similarly,
9 the chronic conditions, the other things you will see, a
10 disability or any level of impairment from obesity, if
11 you'll look at that over the -- from 2000 to 2010, those
12 levels went down, didn't go up.

13 Another factor is cancer that can happen from obesity.
14 If you look at the West Virginia cancer rates, we went --
15 and not just cancer rates because, if you get a little spot
16 on the skin cancer, you don't need opioids for that. It's
17 the cancers that kill you because, end of life, that's what
18 you use opioids for. Those numbers went down 18 percent,
19 cancer morality, between 2000 and 2010, I believe. So, the
20 numbers actually were trending in the opposite direction.

21 **Q.** What about age? Is the fact that West Virginia has an
22 older population a justification for a higher rate of a
23 prescribing of opioids?

24 MS. MAINIGI: Objection, foundation. He's not
25 here as a prescribing doctor, Your Honor.

1 THE COURT: Sustained.

2 BY MR. FARRELL:

3 Q. Are you familiar with -- in the field of public health
4 whether or not age is a factor in the prescribing of
5 opioids?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Please explain.

8 A. As I testified earlier, the older one goes, there is
9 more likely of having conditions that lead you to have
10 chronic pain, things like arthritis, things like cancer.
11 So, there are conditions which cause you to have an
12 appropriate management of pain.

13 They could be no medication. They could be
14 non-pharmaceutical intervention for pain. It could be
15 pharmaceutical intervention for pain. A non-opioid. And
16 there could be opioid interventions for chronic pain, as
17 well. Given all of these options but, clearly, when you're
18 older, the needs for pain management is a lot more than you
19 are younger.

20 Q. Thank you. Final question. In the Exhibit P-41213
21 there was a discussion about the scope of your historical
22 analysis and the testimony was that you had used the
23 reference point of 2001 and you were asked on cross
24 examination, or it was elicited earlier, that you looked
25 back to 1999 and your testimony was that, in '99, West

1 Virginia was below the national average.

2 My question is, can you quantify from 1999, based on
3 your recollection, where West Virginia fell within the
4 national average?

5 MS. MAINIGI: Objection, Your Honor, foundation.

6 THE COURT: I'm going to let him answer that one.
7 Overruled.

8 Answer it if you can.

9 THE WITNESS: Yes, sir. In 1999, according to the
10 data of the Health Sciences Center, Health Statistics Center
11 in West Virginia, our rate for overdose death rate was 4.1
12 per hundred thousand people. The national rate at the time
13 was six per 100,000 people. So, our rate in West Virginia,
14 overdose death rate, was lower significantly than the
15 national rate and that flipped in 2001. And, by 2017-2018,
16 it was all the way up to 57 -- 52 to 57 deaths, depending on
17 which area you're looking at.

18 THE COURT: Hasn't he already testified to all
19 this?

20 MR. FARRELL: Sir, he did not quantify the 1999
21 numbers.

22 THE COURT: All right.

23 MR. FARRELL: And I believe he did quantify the
24 current ones. He just didn't quantify 1999.

25 That's all the questions I have, Judge. Thank you.

1 MS. MAINIGI: No recross, Your Honor.

2 THE COURT: Mr. Hester, do you have anything?

3 MR. HESTER: I have one question, Your Honor, and
4 I will be very brief.

5 **RECROSS EXAMINATION**

6 **BY MR. HESTER:**

7 **Q.** Dr. Gupta, just one question for you. Ms. Kearse asked
8 you to look at Plaintiff's Exhibit 41213. This is the
9 Historical Overview of Drug Overdose Deaths, 2001 to '15.
10 And Ms. Kearse pointed you to Page 5 and asked you to read
11 into the record the sentence that the number one cause of
12 drug overdose deaths was associated with opiates. Do you
13 recall that?

14 **A.** Yes.

15 **Q.** And the reference opiates there includes illegal drugs,
16 illegal heroin, illicit Fentanyl. It's not prescription
17 opioids; it's all opiates, correct?

18 **A.** Opiates, particularly, are naturally synthesized. That
19 would include several of the nonsynthetic, natural
20 so-called, opioids. That would include illicit, as well.

21 **Q.** So, include heroin?

22 **A.** Yes.

23 **Q.** And would include Fentanyl that's laced into heroin,
24 correct?

25 **A.** To the point that -- Fentanyl, I'm not -- I have not

1 known Fentanyl to be a naturally occurring opioid, so I
2 would include Fentanyl in that.

3 MR. HESTER: Okay, thank you. That's all the
4 questions I have.

5 Thank you, Your Honor.

6 THE COURT: Ms. Callas, do you have anything?

7 MS. CALLAS: No, Your Honor. Thank you.

8 THE COURT: May Dr. Gupta be excused?

9 MS. MAINIGI: Yes, Your Honor.

10 THE COURT: Thank you, sir, very much, and we
11 appreciate your indulgence with us. And I know you've got
12 things you need to deal with and I wish you the best. And
13 thank you, sir, very much for being here. Appreciate it.

14 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Your Honor.

15 THE COURT: You're free to go.

16 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

17 MR. FARRELL: Judge, may we have five minutes to
18 make a witness change?

19 THE COURT: Yes. Let's be in recess for five
20 minutes.

21 (Recess taken)

22 MS. CALLAS: Your Honor, I have one housekeeping
23 matter. If I might move the admission of Defendant's
24 Exhibit 2906. It was the 2016 Annual Report.

25 MS. KEARSE: No objection.